THE

saint

DETECTIVE MAGAZINE

JUNE
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ICD

Edited by LESLIE CHARTERIS

The Crime of the Communist
by G. K. CHESTERTON

When Greek Meets Greek
by GRAHAM GREENE

Magnificent Liar
by OCTAVUS ROY COHEN

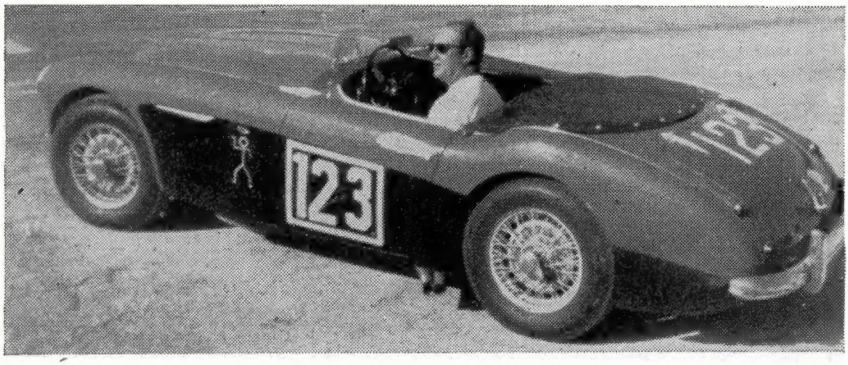
The Case of the Widow
by MARGERY ALLINGHAM

Death in the Jungle
by MURRAY LEINSTER

THE FAST WOMEN
A NEW SAINT STORY by LESLIE CHARTERIS

SOME OLD, SOME NEW — THE FINEST IN MYSTERY FICTION

A KING-SIZE PUBLICATION



THIS PHOTOGRAPH, which may be a welcome relief from the panorama of my austere physiognomy which normally adorns this page, was snapped by your Supervising Editor himself with his little Minox at the Nassau Automobile Races which are the setting of this month's new Saint story. If you look closely you will see the Saint figure on the side of the car just ahead of the number, and the way I was surprised with it is exactly as related in THE FAST WOMEN. The driver, as in the story, is my friend Peter Bethell, a strictly un-fictitious character, as are his wife Betty and my hosts Charlie and Brenda Bethell. We print this picture to prove (*a*) that no effort or expense is spared to make the background of every Saintly adventure as authentic as possible, and (*b*) that you can never be quite sure just how much of a Saint story may be true. After saying which, we had better hasten to assure all the characters mentioned in this one, except Mr. Stirling Moss, that they are strictly figments of my imagination and have no right to think that they ever really did these things.

Not wanting to be niggardly with our free trips to odd places, we also feature a visit to the Solomon Islands with Murray Leinster, an old favorite with science-fiction fans, who is making his first appearance in this magazine with a brand-new and most unusual adventure-mystery, DEATH IN THE JUNGLE. And easily as strange and exotic in atmosphere, if not in mere geographical distance, is the Pennsylvania Dutch country depicted by Lloyd Arthur Eshbach in MURDER BY HEX with the unmistakable authenticity of a man who has lived in and with it.

Of course, we also let you see such comparatively familiar places as London, Oxford, the Norfolk Coast, and even New York, with such well-known guides as Graham Greene, G. K. Chesterton, Margery Allingham, and Octavus Roy Cohen. How else can you travel so far for 35 cents? And no 10% tax, either.

Leslie Charteris

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the fast women

by . . . Leslie Charteris

The Saint visits the auto races in Nassau, meeting a charming—and deadly—gambler for high stakes.

"YOU'RE the Saint," said Cynthia Quillen challengingly. "You kill nasty people, don't you?"

"Sometimes," said Simon Templar tolerantly.

Over the years, he had learned to speak tolerantly, on occasion, especially such occasions as being challenged at cocktail parties by beautiful women who had absorbed a little too much festive spirit.

Of course, not all men would have rated Cynthia Quillen as beautiful. She was a blonde who conspicuously refused to conform to the pneumatic cotton-candy type beloved of Hollywood press agents, which looks as if it would melt in your mouth or any other comfortably upholstered place. She had the kind of "good" features that with enough hard wear can become bony, and the other extensions of her nicely proportioned skeleton were also sufficiently short of adipose padding to entitle a fast assessor to call her skinny. Which is one of those misleading fronts that separate the men from the boys. But Simon Templar had survived long enough to have learned that plenty of slender women were kept that way by a nervous hunger

Simon checks on the adage about the female of the species being deadlier than the male — and comes to a precarious conclusion.

that would have scared Don Juan out of his jockstrap.

"All right," she said. "How much would you charge to wash out that nasty sample over in the corner?"

Simon peered as best he could through an intervening hedge of standing guests, towards the indicated corner, where a rather short well-knit man with a chiseled curly head almost absurdly reminiscent of an ancient Greek statue was absorbed in animated chatter with an even more statuesque brunette.

The Saint did not have to be an automobile-racing fan to recognize him, for Godfrey Quillen was one of the most highly publicized drivers of that or the preceding season, a newcomer who was reportedly crowding the pros in their ratings.

"That's no way to talk about your husband," he reproved her patiently.

"I can talk about him any way I like—that phony, conceited, two-timing, chiseling, short-changing, freeboozing—"

"Hush, darling. You are speaking about God."

" 'God' Quillen! You should see the pit crew smirking when they call him that, when he isn't around! . . . But I don't have to waste a good bullet on *him*. A good subpoena would hurt him just as much. Only I'd never divorce him either, for somebody else to have. The one I'd like you to kill is the Continental indoor sports model with the slippery clutch, who's warming him up for another qualifying lap. Her name is Teresa Montesino, if you insist on a label on every tombstone."

Simon allowed his somewhat obstructed gaze to transfer itself to the exotic pulse-perturber on whom Godfrey Quillen was exerting his highest-octane charm. This was not an unbearably painful shift. The brunette had all the more obvious attractions that Mrs. Quillen superficially lacked. She had the intense dark eyes and sensual lips that automatically inspire exploratory ideas, and the corporeal structure which it is always fun to explore. A hopeless cynic might have prognosticated that at some middle-aged future she could be just plain fat, but this was an unhappy conclusion that a less cautious soul did not have to envisage prematurely. At a similar age to Cynthia's, still safely under thirty, she offered the overwhelming sort of competition that any wife might reasonably have qualms about.

"You can't shoot him for having good eyesight," said the Saint soothingly.

"I told you, I'd rather keep him. I've been doing it for so long that I guess I've got to like the habit. How do you think he got to be a big racing driver?"

"Not by being good at it?"

"Oh, he's fairly good—for an amateur jockey who hardly knows

how to change a spark plug. But General Motors doesn't build racing cars and sponsor teams like the European manufacturers. And if they did, they'd hire professionals who came up the hard way—not glamor boys with a rich wife."

"Are you a rich wife?"

"Loaded." She looked into her glass, and made a grimace. "In more ways than one. But he was what I wanted, and I could afford it, so I let him have fun spending my money. And brother, are those expensive toys! You have no idea what it costs to keep replacing those buggies, besides the care and feeding while they last. Nothing but the best of everything. Oil that Cleopatra should have a facial with, and a new set of tires every—"

"I know something about it. But most of us throw good money away on one silly plaything or another."

"And Godfrey is my bauble-boy. Thanks. I like your subtle touch, Saint. So you'll understand that if I feel like protecting my investment from that high-compression stepmother of Romulus and Remus—"

"Foster mother," Simon corrected her gently. "That is, if you're talking about the famous she-wolf. Well, it seems to me that all you'd have to do is yank the checkbook out from under him."

Cynthia Quillen exchanged her empty glass for a full one from the well-stocked tray of a hospitably roving waiter, with the dexterity of a veteran at such functions.

"You're not being very bright," she said peevishly. "If I did that, he'd sulk for weeks, and so what would that give me? You don't *know* what a brilliant sulker he is. Why make complications, when the obvious and effective answer is staring you in the face? Just exterminate the menace with the un-sealed-beam headlights. I'd pay quite a lot for it."

The Saint permitted himself one of his sometimes well-concealed sighs. This was a hell of a way to start a visit to Nassau, where he had gone only to take in that sub-tropical island's annual Speed Week—perhaps pleasantly leavened by the social festivities that considerately coincided therewith. He had enough friends in the Bahamas to be assured of all the incidental entertainment he wanted; and although the days when he himself had burned up a few tires under a certain cream-and-red Hirondel were now approaching the realms of reminiscence if not legend, he could still feel some of the old vibrations in the blood stream awakened by the smell of Castrol and the roar of beautifully tuned engines and the sight of sleek wheeled monsters crowding each other through dizzying chicanes. But invitations to murder were even farther than those old road-racing days from

anything he expected to be actively involved in on that trip.

"You're kidding, of course—I hope," he said, and had an uncomfortable presentiment of her answer before he heard it.

"Try me with a blank check and a good ball-point pen."

He shook his head.

"You can't take it with you, but don't throw it away. If Teresa is what you think, you could buy her off for much less than you could hire me."

Mrs. Quillen scowled with increasing alcoholic frustration at the fresh drink which she had already half finished.

"You won't take me seriously," she complained. "If I have to do it myself, and I swung for it, I hope you'll be sorry. You could've got me out of that predicament. If you even only made love to her yourself, and took her away from him, which I'm sure you could do easily—"

"Now you're making sense," said the Saint, grasping the straw gratefully. "Why don't you introduce me?"

Before she could say anything else, he had taken her enthusiastically by the arm and was steering her through the throng with a firmness that was within an ounce of the closest that good manners could come to violence.

"Well," Cynthia said, almost breathlessly. "If it isn't my ever-loving husband. And the lovable Miss Montesino. Meet my new friend, Mr. Templar."

"I was hoping I'd meet you, Mr. Templar," Godfrey Quillen said, with an almost professionally fervent handshake and a wide smile of white teeth. "Sometimes I've almost wondered if you were real—my very favorite character!"

"Mine, too," said Teresa Montesino, with a softer and even warmer touch.

"That's wonderful, darling," Cynthia said, looking directly at her. "Because you just won him. Godfrey and I are late already for a dull old dinner party of respectably married couples."

Her spouse consulted his wristwatch with rather elaborate nonchalance.

"Why, so we are, sweetheart. How terribly tedious. Will you excuse us, Teresa? And Mr. Templar—" He insisted on another, even heartier handshake. "Come and see us messing about in the pits tomorrow. You might give us some new ideas. I'd like to talk to you . . ."

His wife practically dragged him away, amiably protesting. She could do this convincingly, for they were almost the same height, though he had a well-knit breadth that made you think of him as a bigger man when you remembered him alone.

"Well, it was nice knowing him," Simon remarked, following the rest of the exit with his eyes. "Now the next time I meet some

other road-racing buffs, I'll really be able to impress them with reminiscences of my great pal Godfrey Quillen."

"Are you so unhappy to be stuck with me?" asked Teresa.

She had enough Mediterranean accent to give her voice a fascinatingly different intonation, but not enough to attract too much attention or to become quickly tiresome.

"By no means," said the Saint, and gave her another thorough inspection at this more convenient range. "I mean, am I stuck? If so, I have a sensational idea. Let's throw a dinner party of our own —for disreputably unmarried couples. And just to be sure we don't insult anybody, let's not invite anyone else."

"I must try not to wonder if you are insulting me, Simon. And if only I did not already have a date—"

"I'm sorry. I should have known that anyone as fabulous as you—"

"I should not have the embarrassment of breaking it," she concluded serenely, as if he had not interrupted. "Will you excuse me for a minute, to telephone?"

That was the beginning of an evening which he would remember for a long time. Not that he was likely to forget the important details of any adventure, but an evening with Teresa Montesino was quite an experience in its own right.

For all the tourist traffic that flows through it, Nassau is a very small town on a very very small island, so that it has no secret dispensaries of ambrosial food and/or dionysian entertainment known only to a fortunate elite. It takes a very large community to sustain a hideaway so famous that it is a privilege to be permitted to discover it. Simon could offer her nothing that she could not have found for herself by reading a few advertisements, and out of that selection she had already covered plenty of ground in other company. But nothing about the places they went to was new to him either, except what her presence contributed.

They began almost conventionally at a white table under an artistically lighted tree in the patio of Cumberland House, over the ritual turtle pie which is the best-known gastronomic specialty of the islands, and with the equally predictable conversational probings that have to be undergone at such first encounters. He learned that aside from any personal interest in a racing driver, she was one herself.

"But not a very good one yet," she said. "I need a lot more experience, and that is hard for a woman to get. It is a stupid prejudice. You don't need to be a gorilla with great muscles to drive a modern car. All it takes is strong nerves, and a skillful touch, and good judgment. It is one of the

few non-intellectual contests where a woman can start equal with a man. Perhaps that is why they make it so hard for us to prove ourselves. My own father discourages me."

"I thought the name sounded familiar." Simon was frowning. "But I couldn't place—"

"A woman. No, you were thinking of him. Enrico Montesino. He could have been one of the greatest. But he rolled over a mountain corner in the Mexico City race, trying to pass someone he thought had sneered at him. And he says I am too reckless and too emotional!"

"Is he here now?"

"Oh, yes. But not for me. Because he is a great mechanic, too, Ferrari still gave him a job when he could not drive again. And from that job, Godfrey hired him away to be his personal chief mechanic. For this his wife insults me, and perhaps I shall kill her."

Simon only blinked once, for by now the line had begun to sound faintly like a refrain.

"All by yourself?" he inquired hopefully.

"Who else would do it for me?"

He studiously evaded a direct entanglement with her witch's eyes; but after a moment she went on as she had done before, as if she would scarcely have heard anything he said anyway: "Besides, it would be most easy for me to do, in the Ladies' Trophy race. If there is an accident, you will be quite right to suspect me —but that is the most you will be able to do."

The Saint devoted himself to maintaining a *sangfroid* which would have been rated commendable by the sternest British standards.

"I didn't know she was a driver too," he said.

"She isn't. At least, not for any kind of professional racing. But she wants to prove something, and she has learned enough to get through a few qualifying laps. Godfrey is letting her drive his Ace Bristol. He can hardly refuse, since she bought it. She would drive his Ferrari if she could, but it is too big for the class. Another discrimination against women —we can only be trusted with smaller cars. But in my Maserati I shall show her some tricks. Do you know what a real driver can do to an amateur?"

Simon raptly allowed her to embroider some examples, while he made the most of his dinner. He was wise enough at that age not to take the initiative in convulsing his digestion.

Thus the rest of the meal meandered through pleasant trivialities, until over coffee and Benedictine and some background music at the Drake there came the inevitable lull in which he said: "Why do you care enough about Cynthia Quillen to want to knock her off? I gather from some things that

have been said that you've got the inside track—if such a horsey metaphor isn't indecent in strictly horse-power circles—"

"To use your language, that is a position I would have to keep jockeying for, which is not dignified. I would rather have him all to myself. So I am only thinking of the kindest way to take him from her."

"Of course, how stupid of me. Not many girls I know would be so sensitive."

"If I merely steal him because I am more attractive," she went on calmly, without any hint of whether she was unconscious of his irony or ignoring it, "Cynthia would never get over the injury to her pride. She would rather die. So, it would be generous of me to let her."

Simon was glad now that he had waited for this until he had nothing in his mouth to choke on.

"And what does Godfrey think about this?"

"I have not asked. As you have seen, he is the charming type who likes a woman to tell him. The right woman, naturally."

"Yes, little mother."

"You should dance with me to this music," she said.

So for a while he danced with her, as casually as it could be done with anyone of her build and co-operative zeal. Another unfriendly woman might have commented that she was not very subtle about the way she made it difficult for her partner to be unaware for a moment of her architectural assets; but to a victim with hormones it was not a completely unendurable ordeal.

And then there was some other music at the Prince George, not for dancing, where he persuaded her to moderate the Benedictine to B-and-B and tapered himself into Old Curio on the rocks. She seemed to hold her fuel much more phlegmatically than Cynthia, but he wanted to be able to cope with any extra acceleration she might develop.

Thus, after many other bandyings of irrelevancies which this chronicler has no space to quote, Simon only found himself verging back on the fatal subject when he said: "You must get tired of answering this, but why didn't those Roman talent scouts think they could get more dividends from you in a movie than a motor-car?"

"I have had those offers. And perhaps I would be as good as some others who have taken them." She was just brash enough to pull back her shoulders a trifle and take a slightly deeper breath, which on her was a seismic combination. Yet the Saint was far more devastated by the absolute certainty that he detected a downright twinkle in her gaze. "But the competition is much tougher, and I am very lazy. There are a thousand pretty girls who want to be movie stars, but so few who want to drive the *Mille Miglia.*

So, while they scramble for the photographers' attention, the photographers scramble for mine. And while they must submit to many horrible people with influence, I can choose my important people."

"Thank you," said the Saint gravely. "But if Godfrey heard all that I have this evening, do you think his respiration would be running at the same r-p-m?"

"It might be accelerated a lot. But being a gentleman, you will not tell him. And if you did, being the kind of man he is, he would not believe you, and only punch your nose."

"Now I'm feeling miserable too. Where would you like to go next?"

She was in the mood then for some of the more boisterous native entertainment, so he walked her a couple of blocks up Bay Street to the Junkanoo, where it was noisy enough to make any but the most succinct and rudimentary forms of conversation impossible. It was a respite of sorts, if not exactly a soporific; and when she suggested another move after the deafening climax of the floor show that they had walked in on, he would have hated to be called for an appraisal of just how grateful he was.

"This is all wonderful for me," he said, with ingenious congeniality. "But I don't have to be needle-eyed and full of reflexes tomorrow."

"I know, you think I should go home. Very well, take me."

It would have been only another fairly short walk, and pleasant in the mild freshness of the night, but the little car he had rented was even closer, and he put her in and drove her up to the Royal Victoria, where she was quartered.

"I think that is the word," she said. "The invited drivers are all guests of the meeting, and they deal us to the hotels like a pack of cards."

"A lot of people like it here," he said. "Personally, when I come to Nassau, I'm not looking for a sterling-area Miami Beach."

"Yes, it is a different atmosphere. But if one could choose whom to be near—"

"One might ask for trouble. Would you be really happy if the Quillens were here too?"

"They are at the Country Club."

"Are they? So am I. Now when I see you there, I'll have to wonder what brought you."

She looked up, through the car window on her side, at the four tiers of deep Colonial verandahs overlooking the driveway where he had stopped.

"My room is that corner one, on the second balcony."

"I'll wave to you, Juliet."

She turned closer to him, one arm partly on the back of the seat and partly on his shoulder, her eyes big and darkly luminous in

the distant light from the entrance.

"Could you not be even a little interested in getting rid of Cynthia for me?" she asked. "You must be so clever at such things, you would not make the mistakes I might make."

"Such as talking so much about it," he said amusedly.

"You think I am drunk? A little, perhaps. But sober enough to know I can deny anything you say I said. But you too can deny anything you like. So, why not be honest?"

Simon reminded himself to remember next time that in alcoholic reaction some steady starters could ride a wild finish. But for that moment he could only fall back on the faintly flippant equanimity developed from some past experience of such challenges.

"All right, darling, what's in it for me? After I've freed Godfrey from his encumbrance, he's inherited her money, and you've married him—"

"We could console ourselves," she said, "until *he* had an accident."

There must be extravagances for which plain silence is ineffectual and a guffaw is inadequate. Simon decided that they were close enough to that pinnacle. He said lightly: "This, I must think over."

"Come upstairs and think."

"The management wouldn't like that. And in the morning you might be sorry too."

She leaned on him even more overwhelmingly, bringing her full relaxed lips within an inch of his mouth. He waited, well aware of the softness that pressed against him. Then she drew back sharply, and slapped his face.

"Thank you, dear," said the Saint, reaching across her to open the other door. "And happy dreams."

She got out of the car. And as she did so, there was one inevitably perfect moment in which she offered a transient target that the most careful posing could never have improved. With the palm of his hand, he gave it an accolade that added an unpremeditated zip to her disembarcation and left her in stinging stupefaction for long enough for him to shut the car door again and get it moving out of range of retribution.

Almost as soon as he turned the next corner he had cooled off. He had a violent aversion to being slapped, and the smack with which he had reciprocated had been uninhibitedly meant to hurt, but he realized that she had some material for self-justification. Any woman who candidly offers all her physical potential to a man, and has as much to offer as Teresa Montesino, and is rejected with even good-natured urbanity, can be expected to respond rather primitively.

Simon Templar had no virtuous

feelings about the rejection. He was quite animal enough to be keenly aware of what she had in stock for the male animal, and he no longer had any lower-case saintly scruples about taking advantage of a grown woman whose natural impulses came more readily to the surface in the glow of certain liquid refreshments. He hadn't for one moment seriously contemplated making love to Teresa for any reward that Cynthia Quillen might have offered, but neither did that mean that he was resolved to fight to the death against letting her drag him into bed. He hadn't expected her to make any such effort, but when it happened he had found himself chilled by an unprecedented caution.

Recalling everyone of the pertinent exchanges of their brief acquaintance, the slant of every second word that had been spoken, the Saint admitted to himself that he had been just plain scared. Discretion he could admire, and go along with; but a partnership in deception is another basis. He knew better than most people how many graveyards contain the headstones of men who listened too accommodatingly to the siren song which begins *"If only something would happen to . . ."* And Teresa had revealed herself much too acutely conscious of the rules of evidence for a free-wheeling freebooter's peace of mind. Getting into her bedroom might have been delightfully easy; but getting out again, unhooked by any whimsical barbs of her alcoholically precarious mood, might have been another deal altogether, and much more complicated than anything he had envisaged for that excursion.

"I must be getting old," he told himself wryly. And then he wondered how old you had to get before two totally differently attractive women each asked your advice about murdering the other, during the same evening. He thought that life might get really dull when there was no proposition you could afford to turn down and be satisfied with your own estimate of what you had passed up. He could see Teresa's last stunned expression as starkly frozen as a flash photo in his mind's eye, and was still laughing when he fell asleep.

He did not see the Quillens at breakfast in the dining room the next morning, or while he swam and sunned himself on the beach. But they could as well have breakfasted in their room, and immediately afterwards have had mechanical details to concern themselves with at the track before the general public came to watch the vehicles vehicling. Simon did not concern himself unduly with the thought that there might be a fairly fresh cadaver on the premises somewhere, and he was right. Charlie and Brenda Bethell, who had offered him a

seat in their box for that afternoon, lunched with him at the Club and drove him out to the track, and among the first people he saw as they came down off the bridge at the end of the grandstand were Cynthia and Godfrey Quillen, both very much alive, even to a degree of visible vigor.

In fact, from their gestures and attitudes, one might have thought at a distance that they were having a heated argument; and as Simon excused himself and strolled along the front of the pits towards them, they greeted him with a simultaneous cordiality which suggested that he might have been a welcome interruption.

"I suppose this is a tactical conference," said the Saint, with smiling tactlessness. "I'm sure that racing pilots don't commit back-seat driving, even by remote control."

"Hah!" Cynthia said tersely. "I was just asking the wizard, here, to stop nagging our boss mechanic about something that went wrong yesterday, as long as he's got to service the car I'm driving today."

"That's why I want to keep him up to the mark, sweetheart," Quillen said. "If he's going to take thirty-two seconds over a routine wheel change—"

"Besides fixing something in the ignition that might have left you waiting to be towed home from the next lap."

"So he says. I don't know. I'm a driver, not an engineer. Anyhow, that was when Moss passed me, and I never had a hope of catching him again."

"That wasn't Enrico's fault. You were the driver, my dear. But now he's sulking again, and he might easily feel mean enough to do something to the Bristol that'd make it crack up this afternoon, with me in it. Everybody knows about these Italian vendettas and the stiletto in your back."

Godfrey Quillen appealed to Simon with a deprecating grin that was a model of husbandly tolerance, effortless *savoir faire,* and older-boyish charm.

"Please tell her that all Italians aren't members of the Mafia or Sicilian bandits and all that nonsense."

"I've personally known at least five who weren't," Simon said solemnly. "And even if Enrico is a bad one, I'm sure his native chivalry wouldn't let him work off a grudge on you. When Godfrey loses a wheel in the chicane, you might start worrying."

Quillen clapped him heartily and happily on the back.

"Keep it up, pal," he said enthusiastically. "I'm late now for an interview I promised some dame who hooked me the last time I tried to sneak past the press box, but I'll look for you at the bar shortly."

He gave his wife's brow a quick kiss which she had no chance to freeze off or respond to, and was in full but delightfully

definitive retreat before he could be caught in any more dispute.

Cynthia looked at the Saint defensively.

"I said a lot of silly things last night," she stated. "I wish you'd forget them."

"Consider them forgotten."

"Did you have fun?"

"I don't remember," he said, with his blandest smile.

Her eyes flashed with the involuntary exasperation of any woman caught in a trap of logic, but she was game enough to bite off any bid to wriggle out of it.

"All right," she said. "But at least you know what I mean when I tell you I really am scared of Enrico but I can't admit the true reason to Godfrey. You've got to admit it's an impossible situation, with him being the father of—you know who. Suppose *they* were ganging up to get rid of *me?*"

"It might be rather uncomfortable," Simon conceded soothingly. "Especially if you were bothered by wondering who thought of it first. Let's see what they're doing to your car now."

The "pits," which in petroleum-racing parlance are the stables in which mechanical steeds are groomed and babied for their decisive appearance on the track, were literally a figure of speech at this convocation, being completely unexcavated to any unprofessional eye. In effect, they were merely a long row of spaces divided by the pillars that supported the upper level of the "grandstand" where the reserved boxes flanked the press box and control tower and bar; the competitors who wanted and could afford more amenities than could be stacked on rough shelves between the pillars had station wagons and trucks and trailers of all sizes parked behind their berths. The start-and-finish straight was directly in front, where a procession of small noisy bugs was even then buzzing and blattering past in the last laps of an opening amateur event. She led him just a little way along the line, to a smoothly squat white car that looked momentarily like some sort of carnivorous robot preparing to swallow a human tidbit, which it had already engulfed except for the helplessly dangling legs.

"This is Enrico," Cynthia said.

After a second or two the snack squirmed back out of the gaping jaws of the monster, revealing itself to be a very short slight man with thinning hair and extraordinarily bright black eyes that were a perfect complement to his small birdlike beak of a nose.

"She is all-a ready, *signora,*" he said, with a completely factual detachment. "All-a you got to do is-a drive 'er."

He shut down the hood and carefully wiped his oily fingermarks off the spotless paint. To pull out the rag to do it, he first had to put down the wrench he had been working with, for his

left arm hung with an oddly twisted slackness at his side.

"Anyhow," Simon observed, "she must be one of the shiniest cars on the course."

Enrico Montesino's glance flickered over him with the same inscrutable impersonality.

"To me, *signore,* a car is as beautiful as a woman. More beautiful, sometimes."

"You're too modest," said the Saint easily. "I've met your wife's daughter."

The black hawk's eyes settled for a moment only.

"You too?" Montesino said enigmatically. "Yes, she is-a more beautiful than a car. But-a more crazy too, sometimes. So, I must see she is all-a right for da race."

"Now just a minute," Cynthia protested. "This is going too far. She's racing against me, let me remind you—and I'm paying you!"

"She is-a my daughter, *signora.* I only want to be sure her car is all right so she will not get 'urt. I can-a do no more for your car. If you drive good enough, you win—*Scusi!*"

He turned brusquely and walked away, limping a little with the steady rhythm of a man to whom limping has become an integral part of walking; and Cynthia stared after him with her mouth open before she turned to the Saint again.

"You see what I mean?"

"You've got other mechanics, haven't you?"

"Yes, those two working on Godfrey's Ferrari in the next stall."

"You could have them check everything over again."

"And make myself look like a jittery neurotic who shouldn't drive anything faster than a golf cart."

"Well, you are seeing a few bogeys, aren't you?" Simon said reasonably. "So far, my criminological museum hasn't collected any case of a father plotting a homicide to clear a track for his daughter, but I suppose there's a first time for everything."

"I need a drink," Cynthia said.

"That's a great idea. Then when you spin out, I won't have to wonder if it was sabotage."

She glared at him, but before she could formulate a retort the loud speakers above them were rasping an appeal for entrants in the Ladies' Trophy to get ready to move out to the starting line. Simon grinned and said: "I could be wrong, but I don't think you've any more to worry about than the next driver."

He beat his own retreat before she could argue any more against the reassurance.

It was not that he was determined to duck responsibility at any price. Almost any human being can legitimately claim to be a potential murder victim, if you go by the statistical count of seemingly inoffensive people who somehow get murdered every year. The

Saint simply didn't think that Cynthia Quillen had more grounds for apprehension than anyone else, merely because she seemed to think more about it.

He could be wrong, as he admitted, but he had no idea how wrong when he apologetically rejoined the Bethells in their box.

"Did you find out who's going to win this 'Powder-puff Derby' as they call it?" Brenda asked.

"It'd be an awful event to have to give tips on," Simon said. "I'd be terrified of someone misunderstanding me if I told them I got it straight from the horse's mouth."

The cars below were already being maneuvered on to their marks, while a waggish track steward from the secure anonymity of the public-address system begged the contestants to hurry it up and remember that they were getting lined up for a race and not getting dolled up for a dance. Simon quickly located Teresa Montesino as the focal point of a jostling circle of photographers, who found her custom-tailored skin-tight jade silk coveralls the perfect counterpoint to an otherwise sexless portrait of a somber green Maserati; and he had to grant that they knew their business almost as well as she did. When Cynthia Quillen's Bristol was manhandled into place with herself in it, they had almost run out of film.

And while Cynthia was getting herself snapped in the final scramble, Teresa was making herself comfortable in her seat and had time to sweep a long slow glance along the upper tier of spectators. Although she could only accidentally have recognized anyone from there, Simon was human enough to wonder how she would react if she saw him. But he figured it was more likely to be Godfrey Quillen that she was looking for, and he glanced casually around himself on the same quest. Almost at once he sighted the driver in a corner of the verandah near the bar at the back of the press box where he could not have been seen from the track, in his usual kind of animated conversation with a striking auburn-haired woman whose flawless veneer of cosmetics made one think of a New York City model posing in resort clothes—but only for the smartest magazines.

"They certainly are raising a snazzy type of newshen these days," Simon remarked. "I'll have to find out if that one who's interviewing Quillen would be interested in a few quotes from me."

"She might be," Charlie said mildly, when he had located the subject. "But she isn't what I think you mean by a newshen. That's Mrs. Santander, one of the richest women on the island."

"Oh. Pardon my ignorance."

"She's an ex-wife of José Santander, the Venezuelan oil man."

"Now that's more like type-

casting," said the Saint, with an air of flippant relief; but a couple of knife-thin wrinkles remained between his brows as a throbbing crescendo of revving-up engines drew their attention back to the course.

The starter's flag dropped, and with a deafening roar the twelve tidily deployed automobiles surged forward, comfortably spread out three abreast for a bare instant before they broke ranks and crowded into one suicidal bid for position at the first bend. To the naive spectator who has never seen a shop open its doors to the first arrivals at a genuine bargain sale, or been caught on a suburban artery at the rush hour when a light turns green, these first few seconds are the most thrilling in any race of this kind. Even to Simon Templar it was still one of the peak excitements of every event.

Cynthia's white Bristol was off in front. Teresa's dark-green Maserati, starting from one of the rear positions, shoved viciously through the pack like a bulldozing footballer, shouldering less ruthless drivers aside to left and right with an unswerving callousness which is the only ultimate factor in these jams. She was still only a close fourth at the turn, but the Saint thought she came out of it perceptibly faster than the two cars ahead of her as they flashed into the next short stretch and temporarily disappeared from view.

The track at that time was not laid out with much regard for the audience. Superimposed on the existing runways of Oakes Field, the former airport of Nassau, and making the most possible use of the already paved surfaces, it meandered off into backwaters previously known only to aviators, with little regard for the perspective of the cash customers. The most obvious thrills which the public comes to see in this kind of racing, of course, are on the corners; but practically none of these were clearly visible from the expensive boxes or the general admission stands, or accessible to either class of client. For most of the winding five-mile course, between their dashes through the short spectator stretches, the cars could be followed only in occasional tantalizing glimpses as they whizzed through the two or three fairly distant sections of which the terrain gave an unobstructed vista. This made it pleasantly painless to chat about other things or patronize the bar, without fear of missing too much of the race. On previous days, Simon had found this a fairly agreeable consolation for the inferior visibility; but this time he felt himself nagged by a faint far-down uneasiness, something like a tiny splinter might set up as it worked down into a callused palm. He strained his eyes for the first cars to come out of

the "chicane," two consecutive sharp turns that were at a bad head-on viewing angle from the club stand, and saw the white Bristol still leading, then another car, then another dark green one which had to be Teresa's, the only one of that color in the competition. She had already picked up one notch, through what he knew was some tricky territory.

"Pete won his heat in the Island Race," Brenda mentioned. "They finished just after we got here, while you were talking to the Quillens. They must have changed the starting time—we were supposed to be here for it. Don't tell him you didn't see that 'Saint' stick figure of yours on his bonnet—he only put it on for your benefit."

"Oh, hell," said the Saint contritely. "That's the last thing I would have missed. Where is he?"

"He just came up from the pits. He's in that box down there with Betty."

Peter Bethell was one of Charlie's brothers, and Betty was his wife. In another moment he was with them, still trying to wipe off the mask of track grime outside the stencil of his goggles.

"You shouldn't have done it," said the Saint. "That extra load of paint on my insignia might have cost you a track record."

"It was lighter than paint," Peter said boisterously. "We just had some masking tape left over when we got through putting on the numbers, and didn't know what else to do with it. Thought it might give you a laugh. And perhaps it was lucky for me. It may have been what scared off the ruddy saboteur who was going around messing up all the cars last night."

"The which?" Simon asked sharply.

"Just some silly bugger who must've decided the races weren't exciting enough, so he was trying to arrange a few accidents. The night watchman was just taking a little nap, of course, but he finally woke up and heard this ghoul clanking about in the pits, and yelled at him. You know, *'Who dat?'*—as if the fellow was going to be fool enough to give his name and address. So the chap ran off, very fast, and the watchman couldn't catch him. Anyhow, that's what he says. I expect he was so frightened himself he was running sideways."

"I hadn't heard about that," Charlie said.

"The watchman thought it was just somebody out stealing, and he knew from the way he ran off that he couldn't be carrying much weight. But when some of the crews came out this morning they started finding wheel hubs loose, and oil drain plugs unscrewed, and nails in the tires—a lot of that nonsense. After a while it dawned on them that it wasn't a lot of accidental coincidences, and they started making inquiries."

The Saint had been so fascinated that he realized he had missed the one other possible glimpse of the lady drivers before they would be passing the stands again. A thunder of exhausts was even then heralding the end of the first lap; and he turned to see the Bristol come first under the Esso bridge, a Jaguar after it, and then the smoky green Maserati gaining ground like a thunderbolt, overhauling the Jag by the end of the straight and coming out of the Prince George Corner with a measurable length's lead before they vanished again in pursuit of Cynthia's white steed behind the next topographical obstruction.

"It's between Quillen's wife and the Roman figure—if they don't kill each other," Peter said, with professional-sounding offhandedness.

"Couldn't the watchman give any description of this saboteur?" Simon persisted.

"Nothing that's any use. 'A medium small man,' he thinks, but he doesn't know if he was white or black. *I* know he must've been pretty stupid, because most of the things he did were bound to be spotted before anybody started driving. But even you couldn't catch anyone with as few clues as that."

There was a leaden feeling in the Saint's stomach, a sort of dull premonition of a premonition that was too essentially shocking to take complete form suddenly.

"Don't bet me, or I might have to go to work," he said mechanically.

"You've done your job, old boy. My buggy wasn't touched. This clot obviously saw your mark on it and got panicked. He knew that if he fooled around with that one, the vengeance of the Saint would land on him."

"What time was this?"

"About four o'clock in the morning . . . Ouf! I wonder if I'll ever get all this dust out of my mouth."

Simon's eyes shifted towards the back balcony again. The expensively glamorous Mrs. Santander had disappeared, but Godfrey Quillen was still there, finishing a coke from the bottle and paying no immediate attention to anything else.

"Let's see what we can find to rinse it out," Simon suggested.

But he started moving towards the dispensing counter without waiting to see who would go with him. But Quillen saw him at once, and awaited his approach with expansive cordiality.

"Hi-yah, pal! This is the pause that refreshes, isn't it?—letting the back-seat drivers fight it out."

"Well, it's no strain on me," Simon assented amiably. "But I don't have a wife or a girl friend driving right after some creep has been out in the small hours doing funny things to the hardware."

He knew by the switch of Quillen's eyes, without turning,

that at least one of the Bethells had come with him, and went on: "I suppose you didn't tell Cynthia about that."

"Of course not. The poor girl was having the jitters badly enough already. Besides, this mysterious character can only have been a bit nutty. As Peter must have told you, the things he did weren't clever enough to be likely to cause any real damage."

"Or else he was being very cunning indeed," said the Saint. "Suppose there was only one particular car he wanted to wreck. No matter how clever he was about gaffing it, there was always a remote chance that an investigation would show that the accident mightn't've been quite accidental. It's those remote chances that give amateur plotters nightmares. Because the next phase of an inquiry, naturally, would be to ask who could have a motive for wanting that particular car to crash. So that's where our conspirator becomes a small-time genius. He figures that if it's established that some screwball was out monkeying with a whole lot of cars, in various ways, the question of motive will be knocked out before it comes up. It'll just be accepted that this crackpot managed to sabotage one car in a way that unfortunately wasn't discovered in time."

"That's an interesting theory," said Charlie, who had come up on Simon's other side. "But what if the night watchman hadn't been asleep?"

"That wasn't much of a risk," Peter scoffed. "It's ten to one any night watchman would be taking a nap by that time, if he had any sense. Although this one didn't wake up until the prowler knocked over a couple of empty oil drums, or something like that."

"Which," Simon pointed out, "makes the prowler either extremely clumsy, extraordinarily unlucky—or a pretty cool operator. How do you sleep, Godfrey?"

"Me?" Quillen seemed slightly confused. "Like the proverbial top, pal. And spinning a bit, sometimes, especially after a night like last night. Man, those parties were rugged!"

He held his head graphically, and then all the sunny outgoing personality revived again as he said: "And me still waiting for the big race, so I can't even have a hair of the dog. You've done your stuff, haven't you, Peter? And nobody else has to abstain. Step up, gents, and name it. Take advantage of me."

Simon eased up to the bar with the others, and took part in the ordering. But it was one of the toughest exercises in restraint that he had ever undertaken. In his mind an hour-glass was running out, and the last grains were pure explosive.

He swirled a shot of Peter Dawson around its crystal rocks, and said: "How about Cynthia?"

"Who?" Quillen said puzzledly. "Why?"

"How does she sleep?"

"Like a log, pal. Worse than me. Every morning I wonder if she's dead, and I have to try all sorts of things to find out."

"I don't know where your room is, but when I came in last night I tripped over some loose matting on the upstairs verandah, and nearly fell flat on my face. I was sure I'd woken up the whole joint."

"Not us, pal," Quillen said heartily. "It'd take an atomic bomb to do that."

Charlie Bethell said, in his diffident way: "I don't know how serious you meant to be about this prowler, Simon; but if you're right, it mightn't be so funny. Do you have any other ideas?"

" 'A medium-small man' " Peter quoted. "Can't you tell us his name?"

Simon ignored them to look Quillen slowly up and down, and the driver had a sudden inspiration.

"Wait a minute! Could it have been *a medium-big woman?*"

"It ran away, didn't it, Peter?" Simon said. "Don't tell me that even this local Rip Van Winkle couldn't tell the difference between a man and a woman running."

"I don't know how many women he's chased," Peter said, "but I expect he'd've noticed."

"So if it *was* a man—"

"Oh, come now," Quillen protested. "You sound almost ready to buy that bee in Cynthia's bonnet. I know that Italians are hot-blooded, and all that, but I'll stand up for Enrico. Whatever the evidence is against him—"

"I don't know of any," Simon said gently. "I can imagine someone hoping he'd be a suspect, and trying to build that up on the side. An expert mechanic would be a wonderful fall guy for a job like this. But the evidence says that this prowler ran away, and the watchman couldn't catch him. I've seen Enrico walk, and I don't think he can run."

Quillen's teeth gleamed good-humoredly.

"Well, then, what's the answer, Sherlock?"

The Saint's gaze searched the baffling back stretches of the course with aching intensity. He had never felt that so much lost time had to be caught up so fast, but so smoothly. He had taken so long to be convinced that there was anything to be seriously perturbed about, and now he knew that any squandered second might be ticked off in blood. But only the most leisured nonchalance would convince a shrewd adversary that all his last cards were trumps.

"Don't ask me to be too brilliant," he said. "I was out rather late myself—as you may imagine."

"I don't imagine any more than I have to," Quillen said cheerful-

ly. "But Teresa does tend to keep one up a bit."

"However, I did not trip on the matting when I came in."

"Good for you, pal. But don't feel guilty. Cynthia and I wouldn't've known the difference if you'd knocked over a row of ashcans."

Simon lighted a cigarette.

"But when I did come home, I felt so good, and the moonlight was so fabulous, that I just couldn't go in at once. I had to stay out in the balmy air and soak it up. That's the thing I specially like about the Country Club, as against the other hotels: you've got all those rooms overlooking the beach from which you can get straight out into the gardens, or on to a communal balcony with stairs at each end, and you can come and go as you please without having to pass through a formal lobby or be clocked in and out by any hired busybodies. So I was making the most of this, at about four-thirty this morning, when I saw you sneaking in . . . pal."

It was one of the most outrageous lies he had ever told in his life, but to his immoral credit he achieved it without a waver of expression. It was Godfrey Quillen whose face flushed and fluctuated through a fatal pause.

"I got restless," Quillen said. "You know, sometimes you get a bit keyed up before a big race. I went outside to smoke a cigarette, so as not to disturb Cynthia—"

"But I thought you slept like a spinning top," said the Saint innocently, "and nothing less than the crack of doom would wake Cynthia. On the other hand, if she does sleep so soundly, you might get away to do almost anything without her knowing. But why go to such lengths for a cigarette? When I saw you, you were just getting out of a car, which you'd just driven in and parked." With the basic fiction safely sold, there was no reason not to clinch it with trimmings. "Did you have to drive far enough away so that she wouldn't hear you strike the match? Were you afraid she'd think you were lighting some Venezuelan oil?"

Quillen's mouth opened and shut, without saying anything. His eyes went from side to side, from Simon to Charlie and to Peter. His face seemed uncertain whether to laugh or bluster, but it did neither; and that damning indecision was as good as a confession that was irrevocably underlined by each lengthening second of silence.

The silence was only relative, against the background of a thousand nondescript voices and noises, above which came the rising drone of more machinery approaching. Looking over Quillen's shoulder, Simon saw a dark-green car come around the Esso bend into what they call Sassoon's Straight, which runs a furlong or so behind the box stand and very

slightly off parallel to it. Teresa had stolen the lead somewhere in the back reaches. But the white Bristol was still in the running: it came out of the turn next, a couple of lengths behind and swinging a little wide and wild, but gathering itself and pouring on the coal for a screaming pursuit that began eating up the lost ground at an electrifying rate. The Saint's stroboscopic flash of relief at seeing both cars still rolling winked out as the new picture became as clear and steady to his mind as if he had been sitting beside Cynthia in the cockpit. He could see with clairvoyant vividness her mouth drawn into a gash, her teeth clenched, her eyes blazing, her knuckles white, her right foot flat on the floor. Furious at having been passed, perhaps goaded even more by some professional trick that Teresa might have used to accomplish it, Cynthia Quillen had simply seen red and was determined to even the score regardless of anything she might have been taught about race driving. One basic tenet of which is that there may be more dangerous places in which to lose one's temper than at the helm of a hot pan in a road race, but not much is known about them, because the experimenters who discover them seldom survive to describe them.

Cynthia was recklessly feeding her horses all the gas they needed to overtake the Maserati, and they were doing it at a rate which drew a vague kind of communal shout from the crowd. But to anyone who could make an educated estimate of the ballistic and dynamic factors involved, it was a performance to bring a cold sweat to the palms. For all straights come to an end; and this one ended at the extreme northeast tip of the course with two approximately right-angled turns which reversed it like a broad hairpin to run back into the starting and finishing stretch. At Cynthia's rate of acceleration she could pass Teresa, all right; but in doing it she would build up a velocity that no braking system might be able to cut down again fast enough to navigate the next corner against the immutable drag of centrifugal force . . . even without any mechanical failure.

"He needn't've gone to all that trouble," Peter said, as if half hypnotized. "They'll kill each other anyhow."

"We'd better stop the race," Charlie said, with quiet tenseness.

"You talk to the stewards," Simon snapped.

It may have been a somewhat superfluous directive, for Charlie was already turning towards the press box. But the Saint had a chill fear that even that procedure might be too slow—might perhaps be already too late. At this stage in his career he had become a trifle diffident about some of the more flamboyant performances which he once found irresistible.

But this was one situation in which what could be literally called a grandstand play seemed to be forced on him.

With an almost instantaneous assessment of the physical and formal obstacles between him and the track via the nearest stairway, he swung his long legs over the nearest balcony rail and dropped an easy ten feet to the ground between some only moderately startled camp followers. With hardly a pause in motion he raced through an empty pit stall and across the open tarmac to the assortment of signal flags in their row of sockets beside the starter's box.

He grabbed the red one which means "The race has been stopped," and in his other hand the yellow one which says "Caution," and stepped out into the track, waving them both frantically.

Even so, he was only just in time to get an acknowledging lift of one of Teresa Montesino's green-gloved hands as the Maserati streaked by and he saw its brakes begin to smoke.

But the Bristol did not follow; and as he moved farther out into the fairway, ignoring the frenzied injunctions of the P-A system, his heart sank as he saw a car of a different color swooping down towards the bridge, while in the distance a few tiny figures could be seen running like perturbed ants towards some undiscernible center of fascination behind the far turn.

"The biggest joke of it is," Peter commented later, "that if Cynthia'd tried to make that turn, at the speed she was going, she'd've been practically certain to spin out and roll over and probably break her neck. But that loose nut on the steering arm just happened to fall off in the straight, and she already had the brakes on as hard as she could, and when she tried to turn the wheel nothing happened at all, and so she went ploughing right on off the track into a lot of soft sand that stopped her like a feather pillow. Well, almost. Anyway, if Godfrey hadn't been so bloody clever, she'd probably be stone cold dead in de market, instead of just nursing a few bruises."

"That should make him feel a lot better," said the Saint. "What else will he have to worry about?"

"Oh, the stewards and some other people had quite a talk with him," Charlie said impersonally. "It isn't the sort of thing we want a lot of publicity about. He'll be leaving the island on the next plane—but I don't think Cynthia will be with him."

"Or Mrs. Santander either," Brenda put in. "You may think you were awfully discreet, but I bet the story's all over Nassau before midnight."

"You've got to admit he was no piker," Peter mused. "It even

shook me a bit when we found the Montesino gal's steering fixed the same way, except that hers was still holding by half a thread. One more rough corner, and she could've been another wreck. The kind of sabotage that even a first-class mechanic mightn't spot—and him pretending he didn't know one end of an engine from the other. If it hadn't been for this suspicious Templar character, he might've got rid of all his problems in one happy afternoon."

"Poor Simon," Betty Bethell said. "Now you'll be hounded to death by grateful women."

The Saint grinned untroubledly, and waved a languid hand at a white-coated waiter who was conveniently headed in their direction across the Country Club lounge.

"Let's have another round of that Old Curio," he said.

"Yes, Mr. Templar," said the man. "Right away, sir. But I was comin' to tell you you're wanted on the phone, sir. Some lady callin', sir."

CAPTAIN ADAM YULCH

To quote Edward D. Radin, writing in 12 AGAINST CRIME (Putnam, 1950),—"When the police history of the twentieth century is written, Acting Captain Adam Yulch, commanding officer of the Laundry Mark Identification Bureau of the Nassau County Police, will occupy more than a footnote. Almost every officer has dreamed of solving a case by some lightning-like gesture, and simply by flicking his wrist. Yulch has solved everything from murders to returning a lost laundry bundle. He has in his files more than half a million actual laundry and dry-cleaning marks in current use in many sections of this country," and has proved that, knowingly or not, we all carry with us some evidence of our identity.

Some laundries mark shirts—in invisible ink, we hasten to add—with the customer's address and apartment number, the notation visible only under an infrared lamp. This proved unfortunate for one counterfeiter, surprised by Secret Service men while shaving, who had to rush off without his shirt. Yulch, without even consulting his files, promptly gave the government men an address and added that the man they wanted would be in apartment 3-B.

He was.

There was the time, in 1949, in Jersey City, when the skeleton of a man, dead for at least a year, was found in an oil drum picked up in the Hudson River. Skull bones showed that he had died of a massive fracture. A T-shirt, and a pair of rotting trousers, apparently once worn by the man, were also in the drum. The teeth, the only normal clue, contained ordinary fillings.

One of the men working on the case had heard about Yulch. The clothing was brought to his office. Yulch, using an infrared lamp, was able to raise a faded dry-cleaning number on the lining of an inside pocket. The skeleton—that of a victim in a gang war—was soon identified.

when greek meets greek

by . . . Graham Greene

It was autumn in Oxford. The mists from the river seeped into the bones of confidence men, professors and students.

WHEN the chemist had shut his shop for the night he went through a door at the back of the hall that served both him and the flats above, and then up two flights and a half of stairs, carrying an offering of a little box of pills. The box was stamped with his name and address: Priskett, 14, New End Street, Oxford. He was a middle-aged man with a thin moustache and scared, evasive eyes: he wore his long white coat even when he was off duty as if it had the power of protecting him like a king's uniform from his enemies. So long as he wore it he was free, as it were, from summary trial and execution.

On the top landing was a window: outside Oxford spread through the spring evening: the peevish noise of innumerable bicycles, the gas works, the prison, and the gray spires, beyond the bakers and confectioners, like paper frills. A door was marked with a visiting card, Mr. Nicholas Fennick, B.A.: the chemist rang three short times.

The man who opened the door was sixty years old at least, with snow-white hair and a pink baby-

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Graham Greene, today best known as the author of the much discussed QUIET AMERICAN *(recently made into a movie), also wrote* THE POTTING SHED, *the play in which Dame Sybil Thorndyke starred on Broadway last year,* LOSER TAKES ALL *(Viking), and novels like* MINISTRY OF FEAR, BRIGHTON ROCK, *etc.*

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ish skin. He wore a mulberry velvet dinner jacket, and his glasses swung on the end of a wide black ribbon. He said with a kind of boisterousness, "Ah, Priskett, step in, Priskett. I had just sported my oak for a moment . . ."

"I brought you some more of my pills."

"Invaluable Priskett. If only you had taken a degree—the Society of Apothecaries would have been enough—I would have appointed you resident medical officer of St. Ambrose's."

"How's the college doing?"

"Give me your company for a moment in the common-room, and you shall know all."

Mr. Fennick led the way down a little dark passage cluttered with mackintoshes: Mr. Priskett, feeling his way uneasily from mackintosh to mackintosh, kicked in front of him a pair of girl's shoes.

"One day," Mr. Fennick said, "we must build . . ." and he made a broad confident gesture with his glasses that seemed to press back the walls of the common-room: a small round table covered with a landlady's cloth, three or four shiny chairs and a glass-fronted book case containing a copy of *Every Man His Own Lawyer.*

"My niece Elisabeth," Mr. Fennick said, "my medical adviser." A very young girl with a lean pretty face nodded perfunctorily from behind a typewriter. "I am to train Elisabeth," Mr. Fennick said, "to act as bursar. The strain of being both bursar and president of the college is upsetting my stomach. The pills . . . thank you."

Mr. Priskett said humbly, "And what do you think of the college, Miss Fennick?"

"My name's Cross," the girl said. "I think it's a good idea. I'm surprised my uncle thought of it."

"In a way it was—partly—my idea."

"I'm more surprised still," the girl said firmly.

Mr. Priskett, folding his hands in front of his white coat as though he were pleading before a tribunal, went on, "You see, I said to your uncle that with all these colleges being taken over by the military and the tutors having nothing to do they ought to start teaching by correspondence."

"A glass of audit ale, Priskett?" Mr. Fennick suggested. He took a bottle of brown ale out of a cupboard and poured out two gaseous glasses.

"Of course," Mr. Priskett pleaded, "I hadn't thought of all this—the common-room, I mean, and St. Ambrose's."

"My niece," Mr. Fennick said, "knows very little of the set-up." He began to move restlessly around the room, touching things with his hand. He was rather like an aged bird of prey inspecting the grim components of its nest.

The girl said briskly, "As I see it, Uncle is running a swindle

called St. Ambrose's College, Oxford."

"Not a swindle, my dear. The advertisement was very carefully worded."

He knew it by heart: every phrase had been carefully checked with his copy of *Every Man His Own Lawyer* open on the table. He repeated it now in a voice full and husky with bottled brown ale. " 'War conditions prevent you going up to Oxford. St. Ambrose's —Tom Brown's old college—has made an important break with tradition. For the period of the war only it will be possible to receive tuition by post wherever you may be, whether defending the Empire on the cold rocks of Iceland or on the burning sands of Libya, in the main street of an American town or a cottage in Devonshire . . .' "

"You've overdone it," the girl said. "You always do. That hasn't got a cultured ring. It won't catch anybody but saps."

"There are plenty of saps," Mr. Fennick said.

"Go on."

"Well, I'll skip that bit. 'Degree-diplomas will be granted at the end of three terms instead of the usual three years.' " He explained, "That gives a quick turnover. One can't wait for money these days. 'Gain a real Oxford education at Tom Brown's old college. For full particulars of tuition fees, battels, etc., write to the Bursar.' "

"And do you mean to say the University can't stop that?"

"Anybody," Mr. Fennick said with a kind of pride, "can start a college anywhere. I've never said it was part of the University."

"But battels—battels mean board and lodging."

"In this case," Mr. Fennick said, "it's quite a nominal fee, to keep your name in perpetuity on the books of the old firm—I mean the college."

"And the tuition—"

"Priskett here is the science tutor. I take history and classics. I thought that you, my dear, might tackle—economics?"

"I don't know anything about them."

"The examinations, of course, have to be rather simple—within the capacity of the tutors. (There is an excellent public library here.) And another thing—the fees are returnable if the diploma-degree is not granted."

"You mean—"

"Nobody will ever fail," Mr. Priskett brought breathlessly out with scared excitement.

"And you are really getting results?"

"I waited, my dear, until I could see the distinct possibility of at least six hundred a year for the three of us before I wired you. And today—beyond all my expectations—I have received a letter from Lord Driver. He is entering his son at St. Ambrose's."

"But how can he come here?"

"In his absence, my dear, on his country's service. The Drivers have always been a military family. I looked them up in Debrett."

"What do you think of it?" Mr. Priskett asked with anxiety and triumph.

"I think it's rich. Have you arranged a boat race?"

"There, Priskett," Mr. Fennick said proudly, raising his glass of audit ale, "I told you she was a girl of ideas."

Directly he heard his landlady's feet upon the stairs the elderly man with the gray shaven head began to lay his wet tea-leaves round the base of the aspidistra. When she opened the door he was dabbing the tea-leaves in tenderly with his fingers. "A lovely plant, my dear."

But she wasn't going to be softened at once: he could tell that: she waved a letter at him. "Listen," she said, "what's this Lord Driver business?"

"My name, my dear: a good Christian name like Lord George Sanger had."

"Then why don't they put Mr. Lord Driver on the letter?"

"Ignorance, just ignorance."

"I don't want any hanky-panky from my house. It's always been honest."

"Perhaps they didn't know if I was an esquire or just a plain mister, so they left it blank."

"It's sent from St. Ambrose's College, Oxford: people like that ought to know."

"It comes, my dear, of your having such a good address. W.1. And all the gentry live in mewses." He made a half-hearted snatch at the letter, but the landlady held it out of reach.

"What are the likes of you writing to Oxford College about?"

"My dear," he said with strained dignity, "I may have been a little unfortunate: it may even be that I have spent a few years in chokey, but I have the rights of a free man."

"And a son in quod."

"Not in quod, my dear. Borstal is quite another institution. It is—a kind of college."

"Like St. Ambrose's."

"Perhaps not quite of the same rank."

He was too much for her: he was usually in the end too much for her. Before his first stay at the Scrubs he had held a number of positions as man-servant and even butler: the way he raised his eyebrows he had learned from Lord Charles Manville: he wore his clothes like an eccentric peer, and you might say that he had even learned the best way to pilfer from old Lord Bellew who had a penchant for silver spoons.

"And now, my dear, if you'd just let me have my letter?" He put his hand tentatively forward: he was as daunted by her as she was by him: they sparred endlessly and lost to each other: intermin-

ably the battle was never won—they were always afraid. This time it was his victory. She slammed the door. Suddenly, ferociously, when the door had closed, he made a little vulgar noise at the aspidistra. Then he put on his glasses and began to read.

His son had been accepted for St. Ambrose's, Oxford. The great fact stared up at him above the sprawling decorative signature of the President. Never had he been more thankful for the coincidence of his name.

"It will be my great pleasure," the President wrote, "to pay personal attention to your son's career at St. Ambrose's. In these days it is an honor to welcome a member of a great military family like yours."

Driver felt an odd mixture of amusement and of genuine pride. He'd put one over on them, but his breast swelled within his waistcoat at the idea that now he had a son at Oxford.

But there were two snags—minor snags when he considered how far he'd got already. It was apparently an old Oxford custom that fees should be paid in advance, and then there were the examinations. His son couldn't do them himself: Borstal would not allow it, and he wouldn't be out for another six months. Besides the whole beauty of the idea was that he should receive the gift of an Oxford degree as a kind of welcome home. Like a chess player who is always several moves ahead, he was already seeing his way around these difficulties.

The fees he felt sure in his case were only a matter of bluff: a peer could always get credit, and if there was any trouble after the degree had been awarded, he could just tell them to sue and be damned. No Oxford college would like to admit that they'd been imposed on by an old lag. But the examinations. A funny little knowing smile twitched the corners of his mouth: a memory of the Scrubs five years ago and the man they called Daddy, the Reverend Simon Milan. He was a short-time prisoner—they were all short-time prisoners at the Scrubs: no sentence of over three years was ever served there. He remembered the tall lean aristocratic parson with his iron-gray hair and his narrow face like a lawyer's which had gone somehow soft inside with too much love.

A prison, when you came to think of it, contained as much knowledge as a university: there were doctors, financiers, clergy. He knew where he could find Mr. Milan: he was employed in a boarding-house up near Euston Square, and for a few drinks he would do most things—he would certainly make out some fine examination papers.

"I can just hear him now,"

Driver told himself ecstatically, "talking Latin to the warders."

It was autumn in Oxford: people coughed in the long queues for sweets and cakes: and the mists from the river seeped into the cinemas past the commissionaires on the look-out for people without gas-masks. A few undergraduates picked their way through the evacuated swarm: they always looked in a hurry: so much had to be got through in so little time before the army claimed them.

There were lots of pickings for racketeers, Elisabeth Cross thought, but not much chance for a girl to find a husband: the oldest Oxford racket had been elbowed out by the black markets in Woodbines, toffees, tomatoes.

There had been a few days last spring when she had treated St. Ambrose's as a joke, but when she saw the money actually coming in, the whole thing seemed less amusing. Then for some weeks she was acutely unhappy—until she realized that of all the wartime rackets this was the most harmless. They were not reducing supplies like the Ministry of Food, or destroying confidence like the Ministry of Information: her uncle paid income tax, and they even to some extent educated people. The saps, when they took their diploma-degrees would know several things they hadn't known before.

But that didn't help a girl to find a husband.

She came moodily out of the matinée, carrying a bunch of papers she should have been correcting. There was only one "student" who showed any intelligence at all, and that was Lord Driver's son. The papers were forwarded from "somewhere in England" via London by his father: she had nearly found herself caught out several times on points of history, and her uncle she knew was straining his rusty Latin to the limit.

When she got home she knew that there was something in the air: Mr. Priskett was sitting in his white coat on the edge of a chair and her uncle was finishing a stale bottle of beer. When something went wrong he never opened a new bottle: he believed in happy drinking.

They watched her come in in silence: Mr. Priskett's silence was gloomy, her uncle's preoccupied. Something had to be got round—it couldn't be the university authorities: they had stopped bothering him long ago—a lawyer's letter, an irascible interview, and their attempt to maintain "a monopoly of local education"—as Mr. Fennick put it—had ceased.

"Good evening," Elisabeth said. Mr. Priskett looked at Mr. Fennick and Mr. Fennick frowned.

"Has Mr. Priskett run out of pills?"

Mr. Priskett winced.

"I've been thinking," Elisabeth said, "that as we are now in the third term of the academic year, I should like a rise in salary."

Mr. Priskett drew in his breath sharply, keeping his eyes on Mr. Fennick.

"I should like another three pounds a week."

Mr. Fennick rose from the table; he glared ferociously into the top of his dark ale; his frown beetled. The chemist scraped his chair a little backward. And then Mr. Fennick spoke.

" 'We are such stuff as dreams are made on,' " he said and hiccupped slightly.

"Kidneys," Elisabeth said.

" 'Rounded by a sleep. And these our cloud-capped towers . . .' "

"You are misquoting."

" 'Vanished into air, into thin air.' "

"You've been correcting the English papers."

"Unless you allow me to think, to think rapidly and deeply, there won't be any more examination papers," Mr. Fennick said.

"Trouble?"

"I've always been a Republican at heart. I don't see why we want a hereditary peerage."

"A la lanterne," Elisabeth said.

"This man, Lord Driver: why should a mere accident of birth . . . ?"

"He refuses to pay?"

"It isn't that. A man like that expects credit: it's right that he should have credit. But he's written to say that he's coming down tomorrow to see his boy's college. The old fat-headed sentimental fool," Mr. Fennick said.

"I knew you'd be in trouble sooner or later."

"That's the sort of damn fool comfortless thing a girl would say."

"It just needs brain."

Mr. Fennick picked up a brass ash-tray—and then put it down again carefully.

"It's quite simple as soon as you begin to think."

"Think."

Mr. Priskett scraped a chair-leg.

"I'll meet him at the station with a taxi, and take him to, say, Balliol. Lead him straight through into the inner quad, and there you'll be, just looking as if you'd come out of the Master's lodging."

"He'll know it's Balliol."

"He won't. Anybody who knew Oxford couldn't be sap enough to send his son to St. Ambroses."

"Of course it's true. These military families are a bit crass."

"You'll be in an enormous hurry. Consecration or something. Whip him round the Hall, the Chapel, the Library, and hand him back to me outside the Master's. I'll take him out to lunch and see him into his train. It's simple."

Mr. Fennick said broodingly,

"Sometimes I think you're a terrible girl, terrible. Is there nothing you wouldn't think up?"

"I believe," Elisabeth said, "that if you're going to play your own game in a world like this, you've got to play it properly. Of course," she said, "if you are going to play a different game you go to a nunnery or to the wall and like it. But I've only got one game to play."

It really went off very smoothly. Driver found Elisabeth at the barrier: she didn't find him because she was expecting something different. Something about him worried her: it wasn't his clothes or the monocle he never seemed to use—it was something subtler than that. It was almost as though he were afraid of her, he was so ready to fall in with her plans.

"I don't want to be any trouble, my dear, any trouble at all. I know how busy the President must be." When she explained that they would be lunching together in town, he even seemed relieved. "It's just the bricks of the dear old place," he said. "You mustn't mind my being a sentimentalist, my dear."

"Were you at Oxford?"

"No, no. The Drivers, I'm afraid, have neglected the things of the mind."

"Well, I suppose a soldier needs brains?"

He took a sharp look at her, and then answered in quite a different sort of voice, "We believed so in the Lancers."

Then he strolled beside her to the taxi, twirling his monocle, and all the way up from the station he was silent, taking little quiet sideways peeks at her, appraising, approving.

"So this is St. Ambrose's," he said in a hearty voice just beside the porter's lodge and she pushed him quickly by, through the first quad towards the Master's house, where on the doorstep with a B.A. gown over his arm stood Mr. Fennick permanently posed like a piece of garden statuary.

"My uncle, the President," Elisabeth said.

"A charming girl, your niece," Driver said as soon as they were alone together: he had really only meant to make conversation, but as soon as he had spoken the two old crooked minds began to move in harmony.

"She's very home-loving," Mr. Fennick said. "Our famous elms," he went on, waving his hand skywards. "St. Ambrose's rooks."

"Crooks?" Driver said with astonishment.

"Rooks. In the elms. One of our great modern poets wrote about them. 'St. Ambrose elms, oh St. Ambrose elms,' and about 'St. Ambrose rooks calling in wind and rain.' "

"Pretty. Very pretty."

"Nicely turned, I think."

"I meant your niece."

"Ah, yes. This way to the Hall. Up these steps. So often trodden, you know, by Tom Brown."

"Who was Tom Brown?"

"The great Tom Brown—one of Rugby's famous sons." He added thoughtfully, "She'll make a fine wife—and mother."

"Young men are beginning to realize that the flighty ones are not what they want for a lifetime."

They stopped by mutual consent on the top step: they nosed towards each other like two old blind sharks who each believes that what stirs the water close to him is tasty meat.

"Whoever wins her," Mr. Fennick said, "can feel proud. She'll make a fine hostess. . . ." as the future Lady Driver, he thought.

"I and my son," Driver said, "have talked seriously about marriage. He takes rather an old-fashioned view. He'll make a good husband. . . ."

They walked into the hall, and Mr. Fennick led the way round the portraits. "Our founder," he said, pointing at a full-bottomed wig. He chose it deliberately: he felt it smacked a little of himself. Before Swinburne's portrait he hesitated: then pride in St. Ambrose's conquered caution. "The great poet Swinburne," he said. "We sent him down."

"Expelled him?"

"Yes. Bad morals."

"I'm glad you are strict about those."

"Ah, your son is in safe hands at St. Ambrose's."

"It makes me very happy," Driver said. He began to scrutinize the portrait of a nineteenth-century divine. "Fine brushwork," he said. "Now religion—I believe in religion. Basis of the family." He said with a burst of confidence, "You know our young people ought to meet."

Mr. Fennick gleamed happily. "I agree."

"If he passes . . ."

"Oh, he'll certainly pass," Mr. Fennick said.

"He'll be on leave in a week or two. Why shouldn't he take his degree in person?"

"Well, there'd be difficulties."

"Isn't it the custom?"

"Not for postal graduates. The Vice-Chancellor likes to make a small distinction. But, Lord Driver, in the case of so distinguished an alumnus I suggest that I should be deputed to present the degree to your son in London."

"I'd like him to see his college."

"And so he shall in happier days. So much of the college is shut now. I would like him to visit it for the first time when its glory is restored. Allow me and my niece to call on you."

"We are living very quietly."

"Not serious financial trouble, I hope?"

"Oh, no, no."

"I'm so glad. And now let us rejoin the dear girl."

It always seemed to be more convenient to meet at railway stations. The coincidence didn't strike Mr. Fennick who had fortified himself for the journey with a good deal of audit ale, but it struck Elisabeth. The college lately had not been fulfilling expectations and that was partly due to the laziness of Mr. Fennick: from his conversation lately it almost seemed as though he had begun to regard the college as only a step to something else—what, she couldn't quite make out. He was always talking about Lord Driver and his son Frederick and the responsibilities of the peerage. His Republican tendencies had quite lapsed.

"That dear boy," was the way he referred to Frederick, and he marked him 100% for Classics. "It's not often Latin and Greek go with military genius," he said. "A remarkable boy."

"He's not so hot on economics," Elisabeth said.

"We mustn't demand too much book-learning from a soldier."

At Paddington Lord Driver waved anxiously to them through the crowd: he wore a very new suit—one shudders to think how many coupons had been gambled away for the occasion. A little behind him was a very young man with a sullen mouth and a scar on his cheek. Mr. Fennick bustled forward: he wore a black raincoat over his shoulders like a cape and carrying his hat in his hand he disclosed his white hair venerably among the porters.

"My son—Frederick," Lord Driver said.

The boy sullenly took off his hat and put it on again quickly: they wore their hair in the army very short.

"St. Ambrose's welcomes her new graduate," Mr. Fennick said.

Frederick grunted.

The presentation of the degree was made in a private room at Mount Royal. Lord Driver explained that his house had been bombed—a time bomb, he added, a rather necessary explanation since there had been no raids recently.

Mr. Fennick was satisfied if Lord Driver was: he had brought up a B.A. gown, a mortar-board and a Bible in his suitcase, and he made quite an imposing little ceremony between the book-table, the sofa and the radiator, reading out a Latin oration and tapping Frederick lightly on the head with the Bible. The degree-diploma had been expensively printed in two colors by an Anglo-Catholic firm.

Elisabeth was the only uneasy person there. Could the world, she wondered, really contain two such saps? What was this painful feeling growing up in her that perhaps it contained four?

After a little light lunch with bottled brown beer—"almost as good, if I may say so, as our audit ale," Mr. Fennick beamed—the

President and Lord Driver made elaborate moves to drive the two young people out together.

"We've got to talk a little business," Mr. Fennick said, and Lord Driver hinted, "You've not been to the flickers for a year, Frederick."

They were driven out together into bombed shabby Oxford Street while the old men rang cheerfully down for whiskey.

"What's the idea?" Elisabeth said.

He was good-looking: she liked his scar and his sullenness; there was almost too much intelligence and purpose in his eyes. Once he took off his hat and scratched his head: Elisabeth again noticed his short hair. He certainly didn't look a military type. And his suit, like his father's, looked new and ready made. Hadn't he had any clothes to wear when he came on leave?

"I suppose," she said, "they are planning a wedding."

His eyes lit gleefully up. "I wouldn't mind," he said.

"You'd have to get leave from your C.O., wouldn't you?"

"C.O.?" he asked in astonishment, flinching a little like a boy who has been caught out, who hasn't been prepared beforehand with that question. She watched him carefully, remembering all the things that had seemed to her since the beginning odd.

"So you haven't been to the movies for a year?" she said.

"I've been on service."

"Not even an Ensa show?"

"Oh, I don't count those."

"It must be awfully like being in prison."

He grinned weakly, walking faster all the time, so that she might really have been pursuing him through the Hyde Park gates.

"Come clean," she said. "Your father's not Lord Driver."

"Oh, yes he is."

"Any more than my uncle's President of a College."

"What?" He began to laugh—it was an agreeable laugh, a laugh you couldn't trust but a laugh which made you laugh back and agree that in a crazy world like this all sorts of things didn't matter a hang. "I'm just out of Borstal," he said. "What's yours?"

"Oh, I haven't been in prison yet."

He said, "You'll never believe me, but all that ceremony—it looked phoney to me. Of course the Dad swallowed it."

"And my uncle swallowed you. I couldn't quite."

"Well, the wedding's off. In a way I'm sorry."

"I'm still free."

"Well," he said, "we might discuss it," and there in the pale autumn sunlight of the park they did discuss it—from all sorts of angles. There were bigger frauds all round them; officials of the Ministries passed carrying little portfolios: controllers of this and that purred by in motor-cars, and

men with the big blank faces of advertisement hoardings strode purposefully in khaki with scarlet tabs down Park Lane from the Dorchester.

Their fraud was a small one by the world's standard, and a harmless one: the boy from Borstal and the girl from nowhere at all—from the draper's counter and the semi-detached villa.

"He's got a few hundred stowed away, I'm sure of that," said Fred. "He'd make a settlement if he thought he could get the President's niece."

"I wouldn't be surprised if Uncle had five hundred. He'd put it all down for Lord Driver's son."

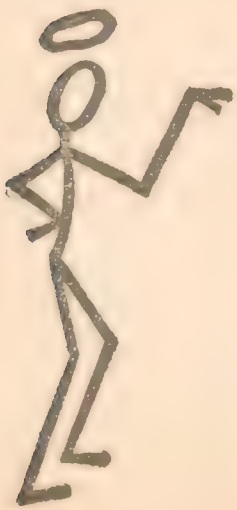
"We'd take over this college business. With a bit of capital we could really make it go. It's just chicken feed now."

They fell in love for no reason at all, in the park, on a bench to save twopences, planning their fraud on the old frauds they knew they could outdo. Then they went back, and Elisabeth declared herself before she'd got properly inside the door. "Frederick and I want to get married."

She almost felt sorry for the old fools as their faces lit suddenly simultaneously up because everything had been so easy, and then darkened with caution as they squinted at each other. "This is very surprising," Lord Driver said, and the President said, "My goodness, young people work fast."

All night the two old men planned their settlements, and the two young ones sat happily back in a corner, watching the elaborate fence, with the secret knowledge that the world is always open to the young.

"GANG BUSTER" ON THE JOB



The new chief of the criminal division of the Justice Department, 41-year-old Malcolm Anderson, formerly with the U. S. Attorney's office in Pittsburgh, moved fast as we were going to press. At his desk in Washington the day after President Eisenhower had proposed him for the office, Anderson foresaw "a more vigorous attack on organized crime," pointing out that "such crime is getting too big for local agencies." The new Justice Department official is the man who coordinated the first simultaneous, nation-wide raids on numbers-racket "banks," and was the prosecutor in the rather publicized case involving oil maps stolen from the Gulf Oil Company.

murder by hex

by . . . Lloyd A. Eshbach

Aaron was in real trouble! He'd had no intention of killing Jake. He had only come for a snip of his hair.

WITH intense interest Constable Harry Franks of Edamville read the feature story in the *Ephrata Review:*

AMISH FARMER HELD IN DEATH OF BASKET MAKER

Aaron Stoltz of Hessville Claims Jacob Loesch Practiced Hexerei

Hessville, Pa., June 3.—(Special to the Review): The town of Hessville was shocked today by the sudden death of Jacob Loesch, basket maker of Rock Hill, near here, and by the arrest of Aaron Stoltz, Hessville farmer, as he left the scene of the alleged crime.

Stoltz, according to police report, was seen leaving the Loesch home by a customer of the basket maker, Emmanuel Diener, who had called to inquire about a basket he had ordered. Upon finding the lifeless body of Loesch, lying on the floor amid signs of violence, Diener rushed home and phoned the Township police. Answering the call, the police

Murder in the Amish country is apt to have somewhat different motivations. Constable Harry Franks of Edamville, who promises to be that rarity, a really different detective, works under conditions familiar to Eshbach, himself Pennsylvania Dutch, whose family has lived in the area for the past 200 years.

car met Aaron Stoltz driving his horse and buggy along the road from Rock Hill to Hessville.

Upon questioning Stoltz, police received the startling information that he had gone to Loesch to get a lock of his hair, and his copy of "The Long Lost Friend," a pow-wow handbook. He needed these as he put it, "because Jacob had hexed me, an' I had to have them to break the spell." He further stated that although he and the basket maker had struggled while he was trying to get the lock of hair, he hadn't hit Loesch very hard.

At this point in his reading the phone rang and Franks looked up, mechanically counting the rings. His call. He lifted the instrument, spoke into the mouthpiece.

"Hello—Franks speaking." He listened briefly, then his eyebrows arched in surprise. "Yes, Moses, I was just reading about it. And I'll be glad to help you and Aaron if I can." Another pause. "Sure—stop in and we'll see what we can work out. I'll be here all afternoon. Have a lot of work to do."

As he returned the phone to its cradle, a half-smile appeared momentarily on Franks' round face. These Amishmen would have have nothing to do with the law, unless they had no choice in the matter. Then they came to him, probably because he understood and respected their beliefs. He knew the Stoltz brothers well: good, solid, industrious farmers, the bachelor, Aaron, living with his older married brother, Moses.

Franks' attention returned to the newspaper article, but except for the fact that cause of death had not yet been established, and that an autopsy would be performed, he learned nothing new. The first few paragraphs of the story contained all the essential information.

The constable leaned back in his groaning swivel chair, his head against the wall, and folded his hands over his ample midsection. He stared at the ceiling, then closed his eyes, reviewing the information he had gleaned from the *Review*. He lingered on the two words that made this case unusual. "Hexerei"—witchcraft in the "Dutch" country. "Pow-wow"—healing by means of spells, incantations, repitition of Scripture verses, and the like. Superstitions from the Dark Ages still alive in rural Pennsylvania.

Harry Franks' next thought was mere awareness of utter confusion. A huge hand had clutched his shoulder and he was being shaken gently. Why—he'd fallen asleep! With eyes wide open he sat swiftly erect and grinned owlishly at Moses Stoltz.

"Must've dozed off," he exclaimed as he shook hands with his visitor. The hand that grasped

his was horn-hard and amazingly strong, for Stoltz was a big man, accustomed to long hours of hard labor since boyhood. His sun-browned face was stern and solemn, his strong, smooth-shaven jaw indicating quiet stubbornness. He wore the buttonless black garb of the "plain" sect of which he was a member, and his longish squarecut hair was topped by a broadbrimmed black felt hat with a rounded crown. This hat remained upon his head during the entire conversation that followed.

"Well, Moses," Franks began, indicating the story in the *Ephrata Review,* "it looks as though your brother has got himself into real trouble."

Moses Stoltz shook his head dolefully. "Yes, big trouble," he said with his broad Pennsylvania Dutch accent. "An' he's mighty lucky if he gets out at all. I said to my wife Lisbet if anyone can help Aaron, it iss Harry Franks."

"Don't count too heavily on that, Moses," the constable admonished. "If Aaron is really guilty, his only hope is the best lawyer money can buy—and even then he may go to jail. But tell me, what actually happened?"

"Yes, well. For a long time now Aaron iss hexed. He can't eat right, he can't sleep, he loses weight. He goes to Dr. Zimmerman an' his medicine don't take ahold atall. He tries everything. He goes to different Pow-wow Doctors, an' they don't help. They tell him, 'Yes, you are hexed,' but their pow-wowing don't do no good. Then Nathanial Reichel tells him to try old Elly Schmick. She lives there in the bush over behind Bowansville, and she has the name of being an old hex.

"That Saturday when market iss over Aaron drives to Elly's. When he gets home that night, I see right aways that something troubles him. I ask about it but he says nothing, just shakes his head. Aaron ain't so smart, an' I see he must think things over.

"After church Sunday morning Aaron tells me. Elly Schmick pow-wowed for him, then tells him he iss hexed, an' the man who has hexed him iss Jake Loesch, the old basket maker up by Rock Hill. She tells Aaron she can break the spell if he brings her some of Jake's hair an' his copy of 'The Long Lost Friend.' "

Franks interrupted, "You don't mean that Aaron believed her, do you? Even if he was bewitched—and I'm not admitting this, of course—how could Elly Schmick know who was behind it?"

Moses Stoltz shrugged. "Och, how should I know? I only know what Aaron tells me. An' what Elly says to Aaron was to him gospel."

Constable Franks shook his head resignedly. He knew the deeply imbedded beliefs of many of the Pennsylvania Dutch—since he was one of them himself—but he never ceased to marvel at the

childish gullability of otherwise hardheaded and solid citizens. "Then what happened, Moses?"

"Yesterday morning about ten o'clock Aaron comes in from the tobacco field where we're cultivating. He had nothing much to say all morning. He changes around, hitches up the mare an' drives away. He says nothing to me or Lisbet, but I sure know where he's going—up to Jake Loesch to get that hair.

"The next thing I hear," Stoltz concluded grimly, "Jake iss dead an' the police have Aaron in the lockup in Lancaster."

"Have you seen Aaron since he was arrested?" Franks inquired.

Stoltz shook his head. "Not yet."

"Does he have a lawyer?"

Again Moses shook his head. "You know, Harry, we Amish have nothing to do with the law."

Franks frowned. "Your brother Aaron has something to do with the law in spite of himself—serious business, too. We'll have to get a lawyer to defend him. There's not much we can do until we learn what shows up when they perform the autopsy. The indictment could be second degree murder or manslaughter—or depending on the findings of the doctors, lesser charges. We'll know in due course."

He stood up, terminating the conversation. "I'll go to see Aaron some time this afternoon. And I think I'll have to pay a visit to Elly Schmick. Think she can help me?"

"I didn't know you were sick!" Moses grinned slyly.

With a short laugh Franks pointed toward the door. "Go 'long now, Moses. I have work to do. Call me about noon tomorrow and I may have something to tell you."

At the Court House in Lancaster, where he was well known, Constable Harry Franks was taken immediately to the cell holding Aaron Stoltz. He found the Amishman lying on a hard cot, snoring faintly. As the big metal door clanged shut, Stoltz sat up, blinking. He was as big as his brother, though somewhat thinner, and he bore marked facial resemblance to Moses. He, however, wore an untrimmed beard, a sign of his unmarried status.

"Hello, Aaron," Franks greeted. "I never thought I'd have to visit you in jail."

"Nor did I expect it, Harry," Aaron smiled. "But anyways, now I can sleep an' eat, beings the hex iss off."

Franks eyed the man keenly, marvelling at his composure. Indeed, he seemed as much at ease as though he were in his home, entertaining a chance caller.

"I came," Franks began, "because your brother Moses asked me to stop and see if I could help you. Tell me, Aaron, did you actually want to kill Jake Loesch?"

Aaron shook his head emphatically. "No—I went only for a snip of his hair to take off the hex. Yes, an' his 'Long Lost Friend.' Elly Schmick told me to fetch them."

"Elly Schmick? What did she have to do with it?"

"Ei, nothing," Aaron answered promptly. "She only told me I was hexed an' that it was the work of Jacob Loesch."

"How did she know?"

Aaron looked puzzled. "How would I know? She just knows these things. She's such a *Hexxa Duktor*—a *worret sauger*—an' why should she say such when it ain't true?"

"That's a good question, indeed," the constable nodded. Mentally he translated Aaron's titles for Elly Schmick—*Hexxa Duktor,* witch doctor; *worret sauger,* fortune teller. "Did any other Pow-wow Doctor tell you Jake Loesch had hexed you?"

"No—they didn't know. But Elly *did,* beings I feel so much better now the hex iss off!" With which irrefutable logic Aaron Stoltz clinched his argument.

Franks lowered his voice. "Aaron, you're in real trouble. Between us, now, did you think you had killed Jake?"

Stoltz answered instantly. "No I didn't. Till they told me I did not know he was dead. I only punched him on the chin. After he fell down I cut off a snip of his hair, then hunted a little while for his 'Long Lost Friend.' I didn't find it so I went out, an' started for home. I wouldn't have killed him—but now he's dead I'm glad—because now—"

"Because," Franks interrupted quietly, "now you can eat and sleep." He rested his hand on Aaron's broad shoulder. "Listen, Aaron, and remember what I say. When the police ask you questions, answer nothing. Tell them you want a lawyer. Tell them you will talk after you have talked with a lawyer. And don't sign any papers. You may not be asked much—and again you may. You hear?"

The big Amishman nodded brightly. "I do that, Harry."

"And now I must go." The constable made his way out of the cell, released by a guard who came at his call.

Before he left the Court House, Franks asked about the coroner's report. Death, he was told, had been caused by a heart attack brought on by the excitement and exertion of a struggle. The blow on his jaw, which had evidently knocked him out, had not been the direct cause of death.

Just before leaving Franks said, "I've been asked by Aaron's brother Moses to hire a lawyer to defend Aaron. I'll send in Morris Crane. He's good and conscientious; he should give Stoltz every chance."

On his way home Constable

Harry Franks gave serious thought to all he had learned. An idea had suggested itself—a question he wished he had asked either of the Stoltz brothers. On sudden impulse he turned off the main pike and followed a side road that led through Hessville. He found the Stoltz farm, found Moses and his two sons working in an immaculately cultivated tobacco field, hand-hoeing the long straight rows of broad leaved plants. Not a weed marred the perfection of the rows, not a stone was visible in the rich red soil.

Carrying his hoe, Stoltz walked over to the road to greet the constable. "Well, Harry," he asked him anxiously, "what did you learn?"

"Mostly good news," Franks answered. "Jacob Loesch died of a heart attack. It was caused by Aaron's attempt to get a lock of Jake's hair, so in a sense he's guilty, but the probability is that the District Attorney won't charge him with more than assault and battery. This could mean a jail sentence of a couple months to a couple years. He might also get a suspended sentence, which would mean that he wouldn't go to jail at all." Franks paused, narrowed eyes holding those of Stoltz.

"Yet, Moses," he said solemnly, "I think murder's been done here!"

The Amishman looked confused. "Murder? But you just said he died of a heart attack!"

"Did you know that Loesch had a weak heart, Moses?"

Stoltz nodded slowly. "Ei, sure. Lots of people knew it. For all that, Aaron knew it too."

"Did Elly Schmick know it?"

Moses Stoltz's eyes opened wide. "Ei, sure!" he exclaimed. "Loesch kept company years ago with Elly. They were young then. An' Elly said they were getting married—only Jake never showed up at the weddin'. Jake said he had just found out he had a weak heart so he shouldn't marry Elly or anyone else. An' he didn't, neither."

Slowly Franks nodded, a satisfied gleam in his eye. "I had sort of an idea that something like that was behind this. The only reason Aaron got after Loesch was the fact that Elly Schmick sent him there. She knew Jake had a weak heart, and she hated him for jilting her. She made Aaron think Jake had bewitched him, and told Aaron to get a lock of Jake's hair, so that the excitement might do just what it did—kill the old man!"

Stoltz stared in wide-eyed wonder, then suddenly drove his right fist into his left palm. "Harry—I think you have right!"

"But the idea and the proof are two different things." Harry Franks strode toward his car. "I'll have to go now. It's almost suppertime and my wife will be looking for me. Tonight I'll call on Elly Schmick."

Pulling his car to the side of a hilly macadam road, Constable Franks turned off the ignition and headlights and sat there giving his next interview some thought. It wasn't possible to drive any closer to the home of Elly Schmick, the *Hexxa Duktor*. The rest of the way led over a narrow stony path impassable to any four-wheeled vehicle.

Franks could see the house through the thicket of second or third growth timber, sumac, poison ivy and weeds. It was a small place, built of native stone, approximately square with a simple gable roof. It perched on top of a high, rounded knoll, commanding a view of the countryside for miles around. It had an unkempt and uninviting look in the gray of evening.

As he stepped from the car a bedlam of noise greeted him—Elly Schmick's dogs. Dogs? Rumor had it that they were half-tame wolves which only Elly could control. Wolves or dogs, Franks thought, he hoped they were chained or otherwise confined.

He reached the door without mishap, noting that the fiercely baying animals were imprisoned behind a strong wire fence. He knocked on the solid oak door which had only one small window at about eye level. As he waited he idly scanned the face of the house. His attention was attracted to a small object nailed to the door near its top. It looked like—it was—

A toad foot!

Into his mind flashed an old Pennsylvania Dutch adage recalled from his boyhood: "A toad foot on the door keeps out the witches." A local application of the use of the pentagram as a charm. Franks had no faith in the supposed powers of these amateur witches—but it was interesting to note that this particular "hex" had some superstitious fears herself!

The door opened and within stood the fattest little woman Franks had ever seen. Less than five feet tall, she was almost that in breadth. There was nothing of the jolly fat person about her; she scowled up at the constable, glaring at him with bright little eyes almost concealed by folds of fat.

"What do you want?" she demanded curtly in the Pennsylvania Dutch dialect, her voice coarse, almost masculine.

Franks answered in the same low German: "I'm looking for a Pow-wow Doctor, and I hear you're a good one."

Grudgingly she stepped back. "Come in." She led him through the room they had entered—which, oddly enough, was the kitchen, smelling strongly of cooking—into the parlor, picking up a lighted kerosene lamp on the way. Without the lamp the interior would have been dark for all window shades were tightly

drawn. The parlor, redolent of mothballs and stale air, was evidently kept closed and unused except by guests and "patients." It was typical of many other Dutch Country parlors, at first glance, furnished with uncomfortable, rarely used and almost priceless antiques.

With an attempt at cordiality she motioned him into a chair, and seated herself in a very low, very broad rocker facing him.

"What is your trouble?" she asked.

Franks drew out a handkerchief and mopped his moisture-free forehead. "It's the fever," he said trying to look distressed. "Once I'm cold, then I'm hot, then cold again, then hot. And there's a soreness in my throat that won't go away. At this time of year this is not right. Doctors can't seem to help me—nor does pow-wowing. I went to Benjie Richwein and Sal Klopp and neither of them did me any good."

Elly Schmick snorted disdainfully. "They know nothing! I can cure you—but it comes high," she warned, watching him intently.

"How high?"

She hesitated. "Ten dollars." As Franks promptly reached for his wallet she added quickly, "For each treatment."

With an effort Franks repressed a chuckle, keeping his expression solemn. This reminded him of a joke he once had heard. . . . For one who dealt in the supernatural, this witch had a most businesslike attitude. He drew out a ten-dollar-bill and watched it disappear into the ample bosom of the woman's far-from-immaculate green-print dress. Then Elly Schmick began her "treatment."

At one end of her parlor the woman had arranged what appeared to be a rough imitation of an altar. A long walnut table, covered by a red cloth, held a large white cross jutting out of a base formed in imitation of rock. It looked like marble but was probably plaster-of-Paris, Franks thought. To the right and left of the cross stood brass candlesticks, each holding a white candle. The *Hexxa Duktor* carried her kerosene lamp over to this display, lighted the candles with the wick of the lamp, and with a puff of breath into the lamp chimney plunged the room into shadow-filled semi-darkness. Placing the still smoking lamp on a nearby shelf, she knelt before the improvised altar.

Harry Franks watched with a growing feeling of revulsion. There was something repulsive, almost obscene, about the gross figure, head bowed and drawn into fat shoulders, heavy lips mouthing soundless words. Like a great fat ugly toad, squatting in the shadows. Designed, consciously or unconsciously, to frighten any imagined ailment out of the superstitious.

For several minutes she re-

mained thus, while the candle flames danced uneasily in an intermittent draft, and grotesque shadows danced in time in the far corners. There was no sound in the room save the harsh breathing of the woman, Franks' own more quiet respiration, and the ceaseless creakings and sighings always found in ancient houses. After a time the constable had to quell an impulse to glance over his shoulder in the direction of especially loud creakings.

At length Elly Schmick arose, struggling and grunting, and approaching Franks, stood behind him.

"Take off your coat," she said in the dialect, "and I treat you for the fever." Reluctantly Franks complied, mentally congratulating himself that he carried his wallet in his trousers pocket. As the heavy hands began to massage his shoulders and spine, the constable gritted his teeth, repressing a shudder of disgust. Why had he let himself in for anything like this! The woman began to mumble what sounded like:

"Potmat sineat. Potmat sineat. Potmat sineat." After a pause the same meaningless phrase was repeated three times. Again. And again. She desisted, crossed to a triangular corner cupboard and selected from several small stacks of paper a single thin sheet. Folding this into eighths, she gave it to Franks, saying, "This you must carry against your skin for three days, and the fever will be gone. Now we work for the sore throat."

Again she stood behind him, placing her cold moist hands about his neck. Franks started as the fingers touched him and a chill crisped his skin. By sheer will he remained motionless while in the dialect Elly Schmick chanted the following:

"Job went through the land
Holding his staff close in his hand,
When God the Lord did meet him,
And said unto him, 'What dost thou grieve at?'
Job said, 'O God, why should I not be sad
When my throat and my mouth are rotting away?'
Then said the Lord to Job:
'In yonder valley there is a well that will cure thee,
And thy mouth and thy throat.' "

At this point the woman blew three great breaths on the back of Harry Franks' neck, intoning as she did so: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

She released him and returned to her seat in the low rocker. "For three days, in the morning and in the evening, I will repeat the spell for you, and at the end of the third day you will be cured."

The constable fought an impulse to take out his handkerchief and scrub away the feel of those

clammy fingers. Never again would he go through anything like this. He berated himself. Why hadn't he had her work a spell for his cows or chickens, or a horse or a dog? He felt unclean, as though something foul had touched him. Unquestionably, this went beyond the call of duty!

"I feel a lot better already," he said, trying to put enthusiasm into his voice. It was true—a lot better than when the "treatment" was being administered. He stood up and put on his coat.

"My work always helps," the woman said smoothly as she too rose, took a candle and relit her lamp.

Following her into the kitchen, Franks said casually: "I'm not from around here, so I'm not too well acquainted. I want to get a wash basket for my wife. I hear there is a good basket maker named Loesch somewhere near here."

"Jake Loesch!" The fat woman fairly bristled and her little eyes glared. "He iss good for nothing. Stay away from him. Why—he even tries to pow-wow! That *lump!*"

"So I have heard," Franks answered. "They say he's good for heart trouble, and I've been thinking of taking my wife to him."

"Heart trouble! Why he himself has a weak heart." She shook her fat jowls for emphasis. "Believe me, that one knows nothing. An' he's a bad one, too—a hex! Don't waste your money with him. Bring your wife here. Heart, fever, wild-fire, warts, weak eyes—they are all one to Elly Schmick!"

Harry Franks moved toward the door. He had had more than enough of this place. Also, he had accomplished his purpose. Elly Schmick had confirmed what Moses Stoltz had said about her. She knew that Loesch had had heart disease—and she hated him.

As the door closed behind him and he stepped into the darkness of a moonless night, Franks on impulse reached up and removed the dried toad foot. Moving carefully down the rocky lane amid the renewed din from the watchdogs, he found an envelope in his coat pocket and slid the leathery thing into it. Only then did he draw out his pocket flashlight to aid in reaching his car.

Thoughtfully he drove back to Edamville, his mind seeking means to prove his suspicions, to bring a killer to justice.

Moses Stoltz walked into Harry Franks' office about noon the next day. After they had exchanged greetings, Moses asked, "Well, Harry, did you see Elly Schmick?"

"Yes, I saw her, and I'm more certain than ever that I've figured things correctly." Briefly then he told of his visit, concluding: "I brought back a souvenir."

He took an envelope from his coat pocket and shook out an odd,

leathery five-toed object. "Do you know what this is, Moses?"

Stoltz nodded quickly. "Ei, sure. *En gruttafus*—a toad foot."

"I took that from Elly Schmick's front door last night."

Stoltz's eyebrows shot up. "So! Then her protection iss gone." And in the dialect he repeated, *"En gruttafus uff die dier halt die hexxa drous."*

Franks nodded. "But the important point is the fact that Elly Schmick believes she needs protection from witches. In short, faker though she is—and, believe me, Moses, she's a conscienceless, repulsive faker—she still has a superstitious streak in her. And we're going to use that to make her admit her plan to kill Loesch and put the blame on Aaron.

"Do you know anyone who can put spells on Elly—someone who is acquainted with *hexerei* practices?"

Reluctantly Moses nodded. "Ei, sure—Matthias Kichline can an' he has no use for Elly—but I want nothing to do with such people. From such comes only trouble."

Franks shook his head impatiently. "Look, Moses, we're not actually going to do anything to the woman. First we're going to let her know that Loesch died, and how he died. Then we'll let her know that someone is working against her to bring her to justice—but she won't know who. You're going to have to do a lot of this, Moses, including keeping an eye on Elly's house and following her if she leaves. Let her know she's being watched, but don't let her find out who is watching her. If she puts up another toad foot or any other witch protection, you'll have to take it down—though how you'll get around the dogs I don't know."

Stoltz shrugged, his conscience evidently having been quieted. "I work at night—an' what if the dogs bark! Often they bark for nothing."

"Let's go then." Franks stood up and reached for his hat. "We'll visit this Matthias Kichline and get things started."

The next two weeks were hectic ones for Constable Harry Franks. It occurred to him afterward that he had done things which were hardly in the line of duty, but at the time this didn't enter his thoughts. He had a conference with Attorney Morris Crane, Aaron Stoltz's lawyer, telling him of his suspicions regarding Elly Schmick, but saying nothing about his attempts to make her confess. He remained silent on the latter point only because he wasn't at all certain of success and he didn't want to appear silly if his plan failed.

One afternoon he paid a second visit to Elly Schmick, ostensibly to arrange a date for his wife to receive "treatment." He found the fat witch on the hilltop in a foul

mood, and his attempts to drew her into a conversation on the subject of Jacob Loesch's death were a total failure. It was apparent that Moses Stoltz and Matthias Kichline were at work, and that Elly's bad humor was a result of their efforts, but this knowledge did Franks no good at all. There was no indication that she was ready to admit to anything.

Aaron Stoltz had been indicted for assault and battery and was still in jail, awaiting Grand Jury action. But he didn't seem especially unhappy, still pointing out that at last he could eat and sleep.

Toward the end of the second week, after a particularly futile day in which nothing had gone right, Franks paced the floor of his office. He had phoned his wife telling her he'd be late, having some unfinished work to do, though why he had done this he had no definite idea. He only knew that he had a subconscious urge to action, a feeling that he had overlooked something of great importance.

The phone rang. It was Moses Stoltz, more excited than he had ever been before to Franks' knowledge. "Harry—I been watching Elly Schmick, like you said. As you know, she has no phone. This afternoon she crossed the fields to her neighbors' an' called someone. I couldn't follow close enough to hear—but just a bit ago I talked with their young son, an' he tells me that Elly is going away somewheres tonight in a machine. She phoned to get someone to drive her. What should I do?"

Franks hesitated. "Not much you can do, Moses. Just do your best. Get to see the driver if you can, and be sure to get the license number. Then let me know what develops."

Replacing the phone he dropped into his desk chair and stared into vacancy. Where could the "hex" woman be going? Had the pressures he had brought to bear backfired? Was she running away? He ridiculed the thought. The little they had done thus far might annoy her, might make her feel uncomfortable, but her running away didn't fit into the picture at all. Then where was she going? Not a single possibility suggested itself, so at last he pigeonholed the question to await developments. A *fine* detective he was, he thought. If he ever got an idea it would probably die of lonesomeness. And even that thought wasn't original!

Fruitless minutes dragged by and an idea came. Nothing startling, but it might lead to something. He opened a drawer and took out a large scratch pad. On this he began noting every detail of the case from his first contact with it:

Read article in *Ephrata Review*

Moses Stoltz phoned in to tell me Aaron was in jail

Jacob Loesch dead

Body found by Emmanuel Diener

Franks paused. Diener. Was he really the innocent bystander? The police had questioned him at great length and were convinced that he was telling the truth. Dead end. He continued writing:

Diener saw Aaron Stoltz leave Loesch home
Called police
Police met Stoltz driving away from scene of crime
He had with him envelope containing lock of hair
Had searched for but couldn't find copy of "Long Lost Friend"

Franks leaned far back in his groaning chair, his eyes closed. Where did "The Long Lost Friend" fit into the picture? Elly Schmick had told Aaron to get a lock of Loesch's hair and his copy of the book. Why? True, it was the Pow-wow Doctor's handbook —but Elly certainly had a copy. It wasn't a rare collectors' item. Copies in German, the ones generally used, were not too plentiful, but even first editions could be bought for twelve or fifteen dollars. Written and published in Reading in 1823, it had been reprinted numerous times, and English translations were currently in print. So why should Elly tell Aaron to get Jake's copy?

Why indeed! That was *it!* With sudden animation he sat up. This was the single factor that didn't fit; it had to be the key to the problem. What a relief. This gave him something concrete to do. His next move must be a trip to the late basket maker's home. He should wait till tomorrow, of course—but there was no time like the present. He'd better take Police Chief Ike Wilson with him.

Swiftly he dialled a number; Edamville's police force answered.

"Ike," Franks said briskly, "this is Harry. Are you busy? . . . Good! I've been doing a little investigating in the death of Jacob Loesch —all unofficial, of course—and I believe I've stumbled on something big. I want to make a slightly illegal call within the next half hour. . . . I know you haven't any authority where we're going, but you have a uniform which might come in handy. . . . I'll pick you up in ten minutes."

He replaced the phone, put on his hat and headed for the door. With his hand on the light switch, he halted, hesitating. Why this sudden hunch to take a pistol with him? True, in a sense they'd probably be committing burglary, but that was no reason to be armed. He shrugged. He'd learned long ago that hunches often had a solid reason behind them, something out of the subconscious. Couldn't do any harm. . . . He went back to his desk and took a loaded automatic from a drawer. Just a hunch, but you never knew. . . .

Harry Franks had picked up

Police Chief Wilson, and they were on their way out of Edamville before the constable offered any explanation. Sketchily then he outlined what had happened, telling of his suspicions, and finally reaching his present activity.

"We're going to go out to Jacob Loesch's house and make a search for that copy of 'The Long Lost Friend.' I don't have a key, but I'm sure we'll find a way to get in. I want you along in case we run into anyone. Your uniform will make it look official."

"But that's burglary," Wilson demurred shakily. "We could get ourselves into a peck of trouble. Why couldn't this wait till tomorrow?"

"I guess it could have—but what's wrong with tonight?"

Wilson mumbled something too faint to be heard, and conversation lagged, each man wrapped in his own thoughts.

The road to the home of the deceased basket maker ran parallel with the Pennsylvania Turnpike for a mile or so before it veered up into the hills. As they drove along beside the steady flow of speeding traffic, Franks was struck by the incongruity of the situation. Here they were, in the middle of the Twentieth Century, in an almost new car, the last word in streamlined luxury and engineering, on an errand that hinged on superstitions out of the Dark Ages. Superstitions as real and alive today as they had ever been, albeit limited to comparatively few people. Yet these same Pennsylvania Dutch—people of German descent, really, who had translated the German *Deutsch* as Dutch—these same people had contributed educators, scientists, medical doctors, literary men—indeed, they had made contributions to every higher stratum of American life. And yet—

"Harry!" Ike Wilson interrupted his revery. "There's a truck parked in front of Loesch's place —and there's a light in the house!"

Franks hadn't realized that they were so close to their destination. As he jammed on the brakes, skidding to a halt, the parked stake truck suddenly came alive. The ignition *whirred,* the motor kicked over—and the truck leaped ahead like a frightened rabbit. Franks failed in his attempt to get a glimpse of the license plate. Should he follow? No; the light in the house was more important.

As he cut off the ignition and leaped from his car, with Wilson at his heels, there came from the house the eerie howl of a dog. The same kind of howl he had heard up on the hill where Elly Schmick lived!

With agility surprising in one of his weight and height, Franks darted to a window. He caught a brief glimpse of a very fat little woman clutching a brown leather covered book in one hand, leaning

over a kerosene lamp. Then darkness.

With a knuckle Franks tapped on the window pane. "Elly," he called, "the game's over. You might as well come out now as later." For answer there came as one the sharp spat of a pistol shot, the crash of breaking glass, and a shrill *zinnng* past Frank's ear. He ducked wildly and crouched out of range, drawing his own pistol.

Damn! This wasn't right. Fat old women who practiced witchcraft didn't carry guns. But this one did! Embarrassing. He didn't want to shoot at a woman even if, technically, she was a burglar. At the same time, he didn't enjoy being shot at by her, either. And she was in there with that important copy of "The Long Lost Friend" while they crouched helplessly outside. She might find a way to destroy it!

The door! There was no window in it, and maybe if one of them held her attention at a window, the other could surprise her through the doorway—*if* the door was unlocked, and *if* it were not for that howling dog. Worth a try anyway. Hastily he whispered his idea to Wilson, motioning him toward a window. Hugging the wall, he moved to the door, pistol ready.

With perfect timing, just as he came to the door, it burst open and a rumbling mass of animal fury leaped out, bowling him over. Dog and man came up together, and as the animal leaped Franks fired. In the darkness he could see no more than a black blur, then that catapulting weight caught him on the chest and again he went down. Even as he fell, terror gripped him and in imagination he could feel tearing jaws closing on his throat.

Again he scrambled up, arms shielding his throat and face, his automatic still in his grasp—but strangely there was no other attack. He stood there, swaying uncertainly, his breath rasping in his throat, trying desperately to see in the utter dark. Surely that single bullet hadn't—but it had! At his feet he half saw the darker bulk that had been the attacking beast. As he groped in his pocket for his flashlight he heard a hushed, tremulous whisper:

"Harry—are you all right?"

"Yeah," he began shakily, then halted, frozen.

A single pistol shot ripped through the stillness from the other side, the back, of the frame house. Then a heavy, stolid voice with a strong Germanic accent exclaimed,

"Och, no! Not tonight you don't, Elly. I take the gun an' the book."

Constable and police officer, with flashlights gleaming, darted around the building to see big Moses Stoltz holding a struggling, squirming Elly Schmick. Moses, who had obeyed orders to keep an eye on the woman. One huge

hand held a pistol and a leather-bound book. The other was buried in the fat woman's iron gray hair, holding her at arm's length so that her flailing fists could not reach him. As the two men appeared, the woman ceased struggling and stood in sullen submission. Stoltz announced with a broad self-satisfied grin,

"They fetched me along in the back of the truck!"

"Keep your gun on her, Ike," Franks directed, then ignored the woman. Eagerly he took the book from Stoltz and in the beam of his flashlight leafed through its pages. He saw nothing unusual until he reached the back of the book. There, covering both sides of what had been a blank page was a solid mass of writing. At the end was the signature, "Jacob Loesch."

"I think this is what we're looking for," Franks said quietly. "Sort of silly for you to hold her like that, Moses, when we have handcuffs with us. We *do* have handcuffs, don't we, Ike?"

"Always carry 'em," Wilson answered, slipping a pair on the wrists of the silent, glowering woman.

As Stoltz released her hair Franks said, "Moses, close up the place, will you? And carry that dead dog into the yard. Then join us in the car. Since Elly's driver didn't wait I guess we'll have to take her with us."

All resistance seemed to have left the *"Hexxa Duktor,"* though even in the light of his torch Franks could see the little eyes glaring out between the rolls of fat with utmost malevolence. She offered no resistance as they seated her in the middle of the back seat, Wilson on one side and, when he returned, Moses Stoltz on the other. Franks slid behind the wheel and turned on the car light. Opening the book to the back pages he began to read the closely written script:

"For a long time Elly Schmick has said she will kill me. Some day maybe she does it and I want if she does that she gets what she should. Elly hates me because I would not marry her. I did learn just before the wedding that Elly had another man but I said nothing about this, only that I had heart trouble and should not marry. It is true that I have a weak heart as Elly knows, and three times she has sent someone to scare or excite me to kill me. One I got drunk and he forgot why he came. One jumped me and I fought him off. That time I almost died. One walked into a trap I had set and all he got was a lump on his head for his trouble. Another time Elly came with her dogs and set them on me. I shot two of them. I should of shot Elly. Now I tell just when these things happen and who came to do Elly's dirty work. . . ."

Franks paused, looking grimly at the woman. "I think we've read enough," he said coldly. "With

this testimony from the dead man himself and the other facts we have, I'm sure we can prove that murder was committed and by whom even if Elly never says another word."

"I say plenty," Elly Schmick shrieked suddenly, and a tide of foul imprecations poured from her lips. "Sure—I planned it so! Sure, Stoltz—I killed him by your simple-headed brother. An' again would I do it! As for you," she spat at Franks, "I should have choked you when I had your neck in my hands!"

Franks turned the key in the ignition. "Guess we'd better be moving," he said quietly. "We've got a twenty mile ride ahead of us—to the county jail. We don't want anything like this in Edamville—not even for one night."

He paused. "Just one more thing." He reached into an inside pocket and took out an envelope. From it he drew a dried toad foot. He tossed it back on Elly Schmick's lap.

"Here," he said, "you might want to fasten this to your cell door. There are a lot of witches where you're going."

The car began to move.

NEXT MONTH—

A legacy from the dead is searched for in
R. Austin Freeman's THE BLUE SCARAB

A young boy fears for his life in
Wenzell Brown's WITNESS TO MURDER

A Maharajah's burglar alarm works very well in
Cornell Woolrich's MIMIC MURDER

A beautiful girl insists she is a murderer in
Melville Davisson Post's THE GUILTY MAN

We learn how Simon first met Peter Quentin in
Leslie Charteris' THE UNBLEMISHED BOOTLEGGER

and

Raffles disturbs some rather pleasant people as he takes a hand in the Sherry Bowl Derby in

RAFFLES AND THE ANGRY BANKER,

A New Story by BARRY PEROWNE

—in *The Saint*

magnificent liar

by . . . Octavus Roy Cohen

His problem was simple—to prevent his son following in his footsteps and making the tragic mistakes he had made.

JIM HANVEY was dreaming. He dreamed of a snug farmhouse, far removed from the hurly-burly of the city; of placid cows and of indolent sheep; of country victuals and rural somnolence. Vacation! Rest! Magic words inducing happy thoughts. But those thoughts were interrupted by the arrival of a caller.

The lean, ascetic face of Jim Hanvey's visitor was marked with deep lines of worry. It was a fine, intelligent face, the face of a gentleman and a man of culture.

Roger Steele was blessed with a figure tall and lithe and graceful. His shoulders were broad and his waist slender. He had the body of an athlete, and only the stern face and the iron-gray hair above it gave a hint of middle age.

He walked to the window, where he stood silent, his form silhouetted against the deep red glow of late afternoon. His body was bent slightly at the waist. Hands were clasped behind his back and his lips were set in a grim straight line. Once he raised his eyes and scrutinized the enor-

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Octavus Roy Cohen returns with still another story of gargantuan Jim Hanvey, surely one of the most unusual detectives yet to be written about. Author of several mysteries including the recent CORPSE THAT WALKED *(Gold Medal), Mr. Cohen has been a distinguished name in American letters since the '20s.*

From: SCRAMBLED YEGGS
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mous figure which wallowed in the easy chair.

The bond between these men was based upon mutual respect. Each paid wholesome and unreserved tribute to the other. Jim knew that Roger Steele was the outstanding gentleman crook of America. Steele understood that Hanvey was preeminently the foremost detective in the country. One was immaculate, the other slovenly; one was dynamic, the other lethargic. A queer pair: hunter and hunted—sincerely fond of each other.

Knowing Hanvey less well, Roger Steele might have been annoyed. Hanvey neither spoke nor moved. It was only when Steele left the window and seated himself on the edge of a chair that the detective produced from his breast pocket a thin black cigar. He lighted this with scrupulous care and puffed luxuriously. Steele winced as the vile odor of bad tobacco assailed his nostrils. But he did not make the usual caustic comment.

Instead, he leaned forward and bored Hanvey with his keen gray eyes.

"Jim," he said, "I'm in trouble."

Hanvey blinked with exasperating slowness.

"Gosh! I'm sorry to hear that, Roger."

"I have come to you for help!"

"You know I'll be glad . . . provided it ain't the police."

"It's not about myself, Jim. I give you my word on that. I've had too much on my mind to run foul of the law recently." Steele lighted a cigarette. "Mind if I start at the beginning, Jim?"

"That's usually an awful good place to commence, Roger. Shoot!"

Obviously, Steele did not find the task simple. Usually at ease, his manner now was constrained. He bit his lip—then spoke swiftly.

"You've known me a long time, Jim. You know what I've been and what I am. No need to rehash. I've swindled and cheated and lied and stolen . . . always like a gentleman. I've made a living playing with marked cards for high stakes. I've engineered fraudulent promotions. I've been rotten all the way through. I—"

"Aw! Say, Roger. You ain't got any right pannin' yourself thataway. You're a fine feller . . . with a sort of twist."

"That's it," interrupted Steele harshly. "A twist! The appearance and education of a gentleman and the psychological complex of a dirty thief. I've always had that, Jim, ever since I was a kid. I can thank my brain for keeping me out of jail. I'm not holding anything back. I want you to understand at the outset that I haven't a redeeming trait."

"You're a good friend, Roger. I know that myself."

The long, slender fingers of the other man were clenched.

"Once in my life, Jim Hanvey, I was straight. That was long before you knew me. It was then that I went through the only clean, decent phase of my life."

He drew a long breath and hesitated a moment, as though abashed by his own emotion. Hanvey had not moved; once again it seemed as though he were slumbering.

"There was a girl, Jim." Hanvey detected a slight break in the man's voice. "We went through the university together. She was —well, anyway, I was in love with her: so much in love that I forgot all the crooked instincts which had been eating my soul. We married the day after graduation. We were . . . we were very happy."

The voice stopped. Hanvey toyed with the golden toothpick, silently waiting for his friend to continue.

"I took a job. Twenty-five dollars a week. We lived on the money. A two-room apartment. No friends—we were sufficient unto each other. It was hard sledding, but worth it. Eighteen months after our marriage . . . my son was born." Steele's face twisted. "She died!"

The detective looked away. It was not pleasant to watch the suffering of a strong man.

"Right after that, Jim, I took my first crooked step. Nothing mattered then, it seemed, and all my instinct was toward the rose path. Besides, there was the boy to consider. . . .

"I needed money for him. The love I had borne my wife was transferred to Ted. All of that love, plus the love which a father has for his first-born. He had a trained nurse, and then, as he grew older, there were private schools. By that time I was successful . . . as you have known me.

"I don't want you to think that I'm claiming I went wrong for the boy's sake. I did it because it was in me; that's all.

"But I saw my problem developing. I knew that Ted must never know the truth about me. He was a fine boy, Jim, even as a youngster. But I knew his heritage, and I was afraid of it. When he was out of school, I made myself his buddy. We played around together. I tried to instil in him every idea of honor and decency which I had discarded. I wanted my son to be straight and clean. But, most of all, I wished to revere, in him, the memory of the only woman I ever loved—to keep alive the only decent thing in my life. Do you understand, Jim?"

The detective nodded heavily. "Yes, Roger, I understand."

"Ted always thought of me as a man of leisure. I taught him to believe that I possessed modestly ample means. I gave him everything he could wish for, within

reason. I was careful not to spoil him. I didn't allow him to become accustomed to luxuries, because I was afraid that the craving for them might injure him in later years. As he grew older, I became more and more haunted by the ghastly fear that he would learn about me. You can see what that would have meant. . . . I guess you can't understand the love I have for the lad, Jim. You're not a father—"

"I can imagine things, can't I, Roger?"

"I believe you can. Anyway, I stayed with the boy as much as I could; it was man and man, not exactly father and son. I taught him to look up to me. It wasn't always easy to face the honest, trusting look in his eyes."

Steele's face was grim. "For once in my life, Jim Hanvey, I'm talking sentiment. You're the first man who has heard anything like this from me, and I hope you'll be the last. It's been bottled up inside—and I had to let loose.

"To continue: Ted and I went hunting in the winter when he was on vacation from college. In the summer we went into the Rockies, or sometimes to Europe. Then, when he graduated, I had a plain talk with him. I explained that he must provide for himself. You see, Jim, I didn't want him to think that life was easy. I wanted him to appreciate money. So I was delighted when he took a job in a broker's office in New York. They started him off at fifty dollars a week. For two years, Jim, I have been a very proud man. And then—just a week ago —the blow fell!"

His voice stopped. Abruptly. Hanvey's bulbous head moved slowly from side to side.

"What blow, Roger?"

The lean, handsome face of the professional was raised.

"Jim," he said hoarsely, "my boy has gone crooked!"

Jim's hands dropped limply into his lap. He wanted to express his deep sympathy, but all he could say was, "Gosh!"

"He's gone crooked, Jim. How far, I don't know. But he's on the road—and I didn't discover it until too late. That's why I've come to you." Steele rose nervously. "You've got to help me, Jim. You've got to keep my boy straight. It isn't too late. It is only by a miracle, Jim, that I'm not in prison now for murder. That was the impulse I had when I heard who Ted had gotten in with."

"Who?" inquired the detective.

"Rip Hanlon and Barney Lane."

Hanvey inbreathed audibly. No futher explanation was needed. He knew Hanlon and Lane: keen, unscrupulous crooks who hated Roger Steele and were, in turn, hated by him. If they had their hands on Steele's son—Jim pursed his lips sympathetically.

"They hooked him, eh?"

"Yes. When I heard it, I started packing. I was going to New York and kill them both. Then I saw that I'd simply be making a fool of myself. Nothing would be accomplished. It isn't that I care for myself, you know that, Jim. I'd give my life for that boy. But the important thing is to keep him straight."

"H'm! Not so nice, Roger. Of course, you know I'll help. But Rip Hanlon and Barney Lane are the fair-haired boys when it comes to bein' slick. If they've hooked the kid, you can lay your bottom dollar that they've hog-tied him and are in the clear themselves. They're hitting at you, of course."

"Yes," said Roger Steele dully. "But that isn't the important thing. I can forget my feud with them. The thing that's driving me crazy, Jim, is this: Ted has a heritage of rottenness. He gets it from me. I've tried to educate it out of him . . . but it's there. He has brain. He has a softness of manner I never had. And he has courage. He would make a successful crook, Jim; that's the horrible thought."

"I understand. About Rip—What's his racket?"

"Fake stock." Steele was speaking crisply. "You know a large proportion of our emeralds come from South America. Colombia. Lots of money has been made by investors in emerald mines. Good enough. Ted organized a company, Tropical Emerald. He is president, and there are two dummy incorporators—stenographers in the office. They own a tract of worthless land in Colombia. They've issued glorious prospectuses with pictures of the mines and all that sort of stuff. It's full of figures about how much money has been made from Colombian emerald mines. Trouble is, they have no mines and no emeralds.

"But the stock-selling is a cinch. There's romance in it, and the prospect of quick and enormous riches. The stock is going to be listed on a wildcat, outlaw exchange, one of those fungus exchanges which exist by duping the ignorant investor. They're going to put it on the market at a dollar a share and manipulate it up. Then, when the crash comes—Ted's holding the bag all by himself. It'll be jail for him. And after that—"

"Sure. . . . But about Rip and Barney?"

"They're out of the picture. Their names don't appear. Not even on the books of the company."

"And Ted fell for that?"

"No," snapped Roger Steele. "He didn't. He knew it was crooked. That's what frightens me. Jim, I'm desperate. The boy has got to be scared out of this. He's got to be given a shock that will do what my education and training have never been able to

accomplish. If he gets caught and goes to jail it will be horrible. If he makes money on this thing and goes scot-free, it will be even worse. Can't you see what I'm up against? And can't you understand that I've got to have your help? If I talked to those men, I'd kill them. Or they—they'd tell Ted the truth about me."

He turned away and pretended to busy himself with a cigarette. But Jim understood. He hoisted himself to his feet and waddled alongside his friend. One fat hand was dropped affectionately on a shoulder which had bent under this blow.

"I don't know what I'll be able to do, Roger. Those two babies are slick, awful slick. But tonight you and me are gonna hop the rattler and beat it for New York. And I'm gonna bust a suspender tryin' to straighten the lad out."

Steele did not speak. He merely wrapped powerful fingers around Jim's flabby wrist and gave a pressure which made the detective wince.

Two days later they were in New York. Roger telephoned his son at the office of Tropical Emerald, Incorporated. Jim stood close beside him and sounded a warning.

"Play dumb, Roger. Don't give the lad a hint."

The father nodded. Then his voice softened, grew gentle as a woman's, as he spoke to his son. Would the lad join them at dinner at the hotel that night? Yes. . . . At eight o'clock.

They were in the lobby when the boy arrived. Hanvey had spoken briefly to the father: "Let him do what talking is done about this stuff, Roger. Of course, you'll ask him what he's doing; but don't be too interested. You savvy?"

"Yes."

Hanvey recognized the lad when he was half a lobby away. He knew that this was Steele's son, and he knew in a flash why Roger Steele worshiped him.

The boy was tall as his father and as broad. He had his father's clear-cut features and his level, gray eyes; but he had a softness, a gentleness, which his father had never possessed. Father and son placed their hands on each other's shoulder.

"Dad!"

"Son!"

Then Steele turned. "This is a friend of mine, son. Mr. Hanvey, this is Ted."

Socially trained, Ted did not betray the shock occasioned by Hanvey's grotesque appearance. Jim felt his hand gripped in a strong pressure, and discovered that he couldn't help liking the lad. His first thought was that Ted was dangerously attractive. Too attractive for his own good. They talked generally, and it was Roger Steele who shifted the subject to the boy's new business.

Jim applauded his coolness. He would have sworn that Roger knew nothing—and feared nothing.

"What's this new job of yours, son? It sounds terribly impressive."

Jim saw the lad flush, but his answer was ready: "Some friends of mine discovered a big deposit of emeralds in Colombia, Dad. They bought the land and we organized a company to exploit it. I think we're going to make a lot of money."

Roger Steele looked away. The boy was so frank, so naïve—Steele was horribly afraid that already Ted had advanced far along the wrong path. The boy talked more of his prospects. He spoke with sincerity and enthusiasm, just as he would have spoken to a would-be buyer of stock in Tropical Emerald. Of course, he presumed that his father knew nothing about such things, and would never suspect; and Jim's sympathies went out to the older man.

After dinner it was easier, and later they went to a musical show, and it was nearly midnight before they separated. Back in the hotel Roger Steele turned a haggard face toward his ponderous friend.

"You see, Jim, the lad has it in him. He could sell stock to anyone. That is the curse of it: he'll either land in jail or be successful in this enterprise. I hardly know which would be worse."

The following morning Hanvey did a little investigating. He located Rip Hanlon and Barney Lane in an apartment hotel in the Eighties.

They were a chubby, cheerful pair of criminals. One would have taken them to be successful business men and avid members of luncheon clubs—nice, respectable family men with never a thought in the world beyond their offices and the verandas of their homes.

As Hanvey entered the apartment, their eyes met for the fraction of an instant. It was a searching, warning glance. Then they turned beaming faces upon their visitor, as though he was the one person in the world whom they were most delighted to welcome.

"If it isn't my old friend, Jim Hanvey! Well, well, well! Have a seat, Jim, and make yourself comfortable. No—we won't smoke one of your rotten cigars; but you can if you wish." They bustled about, quizzing him about himself. He grinned, settled himself in a chair, lighted a black cigar, and stretched.

"How's everything, boys?"

"Fine, Jim. I might almost say, great!"

"And Tropical Emerald?"

Again that lightning flash of warning from Rip to Barney.

"What's that, Jim?".

"How's Tropical Emerald getting along?"

Rip Hanlon scratched his part-

ly bald head. "What is Tropical Emerald, Jim?"

Hanvey chuckled. "Same cagy birds, ain't you? You wouldn't admit anything even if you knew I knew it, would you?"

"Aw now, Jim. That ain't fair. You know good and well we wouldn't think of concealing anything from you. We're a pair of respectable, honest men."

"You're lucky," drawled Jim, "that you're not both dead men right now."

Barney Lane frowned. "How's that, Jim?"

"Because Roger Steele first thought of killing you. Ain't you boys got any better sense than to stir up that sort of hornet's nest? When Steele gets going, he's poison—and you know it."

The cherubic expressions had fled from the faces of the two men. They were grim and very hard.

"We don't like Steele, Jim. More than that: we're not scared of him."

"You better be. You've touched him in a mighty vulnerable spot."

"The kid?" They had thrown pretense aside. They saw that Jim knew facts.

"Listen here, Jim, that youngster is a natural wonder. It's just our good luck that he's on the right side of the fence."

"And the fact that you hate his dad didn't have anything to do with it?"

Rip Hanlon stepped directly in front of the detective. His eyes narrowed to pinpoints.

"There's no use lying to you, Jim. It did! Now—what about it?"

Hanvey's voice was still drawly. He spoke with perfect good nature.

"You boys couldn't have managed to think of a lower-down, rottener, meaner, filthier trick, could you?"

Barney's face flushed; Rip turned purple. His fists clenched.

"Now, listen here, Hanvey—"

"I'll listen to nothing more right now from you two worms." Hanvey had not moved, his voice had not been raised, but it contained a dangerous note. "I don't often get mad, but I'm mad now. I'm plumb sore! You two ain't fitten to be crooks. You belong down in the gutter. Just 'cause you hate the old man, and ain't got the guts to hit straight at him, you set out to ruin the boy's life!"

"Aw! Quit shooting off your mouth. I'm sick and tired of it." Barney Lane leaned closer to the detective. "Suppose you take a look at the records of Tropical Emerald before you start yelling. Our names don't figure in it. Nothing but Ted Steele and a couple of dummies. And if you try to make any trouble we'll tell the kid about his old man."

"And get killed for your trouble."

"A fat lot we're afraid of

Steele! He makes me sick—posing around as a gentleman."

Hanvey binked slowly. "I won't even try appealing to the decent side of you fellows," he murmured, "because rats haven't got any decent side. I'm just asking you: What are you going to make out of this?"

"We square accounts with Roger Steele, in the first place. We've always sworn we would. And, in the second, if you must know, we aren't planning to slough his kid. He's all right, and maybe we'll make him a high-class crook some day. We've got things fixed so he'll come through this all right. Of course, if things should go wrong—he'll be the goat."

"In other words, you fellows are safe, and he'll either be in jail, or a successful criminal. Is that it?"

"Precisely. And no better than his high-hat father!"

Jim shuddered. "I never knew there could be nothin' as low as you two fellers," he commented.

"Well, what of it? We're laying our cards on the table. And, no matter how slick you are, there ain't a thing you can do about it. We ain't going to budge. Look over our books if you want. We're in the clear. The minute the kid sells one share of stock, he's in so deep he'll never get out. Everything's set. The stock will go on sale to the public in the next few days. And let me say one more thing, Hanvey—you're a fat nuisance, and we don't want to be bothered with you any more. We know what we're doing and we intend to see it through. We don't want you butting in."

"No-o. I reckon not. I'll hand you boys this much—you've kept yourself nicely in the clear. But I'll say this for your information: I don't like either of you."

Rip Hanlon gave a short, harsh laugh.

"Scare a guy like Steele with that sort of hooey," he invited. "We're no amateurs!"

Hanvey rose and swayed toward the door. There he turned.

"I'm going back to my hotel, boys. After sittin' here with you fellers I feel like I need a bath."

The door closed behind him, shutting out their sarcastic farewells.

Jim Hanvey was angry. More than that: he was worried. He was of a deepy sentimental nature and the immediate prospect horrified him.

He was fond of Roger Steele and he liked Steele's son. A fine, upstanding lad who had inherited a cloven hoof. He understood Rip Hanlon and Barney Lane too well. They were not planning to double-cross Ted Steele into jail. Not a bit of it. They expected Tropical Emerald to be a success. But things were framed so that if there should happen to be an explosion, Ted would be the sole victim.

Roger Steele was in the hotel room when Hanvey arrived. He seemed to have aged in the brief span of Hanvey's absence. He turned hopefully toward the detective, and winced as the prodigious head waggled negatively.

"Nothing stirring, Roger. They're hard-boiled as a pair of twenty-minute eggs."

Steele bit his lip, but kept himself under excellent control.

"Give me the layout, Jim."

Hanvey spoke deliberately, selecting his words with care so as to cause the father the least misery.

When he was finished Steele looked up.

"They've got Ted bound and gagged, haven't they?"

"Yes."

"And, of course, he knew the thing wasn't on the level."

Jim flushed. "I believe so, Roger."

"Of course, he did. That's what scares me. He's got the wrong stuff in him. He inherits it from me—and it's up to me to save him." He hesitated a moment. "The question is—how?"

"Uh-huh. . . . Of course—no violence."

"No. Not now, at any rate. It would be easy, but it wouldn't do any good."

Roger Steele rose and paced the room. Hanvey watched him sympathetically. At length he turned and his eyes sought those of his detective friend.

"We're thinking the same thing, aren't we, Jim?"

"I reckon so, Roger."

"There's nothing else to do?"

"I wish I thought there was . . ." Jim hesitated. "The kid is crazy about you."

"I think so. And you never can know how I feel toward him. He's wife and son and—and everything — rolled into one. That's why I've got to buck it through. But it isn't going to be easy, Jim. God knows it isn't."

There was nothing Hanvey could say. He felt as though he were talking to a man who was planning to commit suicide. About Roger Steele there was that air of inescapable disaster. He had reached the end of his rope. The hopes and ambitions of a lifetime were to be crushed; the most wonderful thing in his life was to be smashed.

Jim Hanvey knew what Steele meant. The great criminal was going to tell the truth to his son.

Steele walked to the telephone and called the office of Tropical Emerald. He winced with pain as the bright, cheery voice of his idolized son came back to him through the receiver.

"I've got to see you right away, Ted. Down here at the hotel. It's mighty important."

"But, Dad—"

"Come right away, won't you, son? You know I wouldn't insist if it was anything which could wait."

He turned away from the phone. He was pitifully old. "He's coming now, Jim. I wonder if you'd mind sitting through this with me?"

Hanvey crossed the room to his friend and held out his hand.

"On one condition, Roger."

"What is that?"

"No violence. To those other fellers—or yourself."

Steele hesitated, then nodded.

"All right; you have my word."

Then they fell silent. Jim was reminded of a grim experience out of his past when he had remained all night in the cell of a man who was to die the next morning. Except that this was worse than a death sentence to Roger Steele.

The lad arrived at the hotel. He breezed into the room and smiled greetings to them both. Then he frowned.

"What's this?" he inquired lightly. "Looks as though I'd stepped into a funeral."

Steele did not look up.

"Sit down, son."

The lad was disturbed and deeply impressed. Feeling very ill at ease, he seated himself and stared first at Hanvey and then at his father. Roger Steele's voice came slowly. His words were clear and close-clipped; his tone colorless.

"I want you to listen until I finish, Ted. No interruptions, please, because this is going to be hard enough anyway."

He drew a long breath.

"Son, you're in trouble. You don't know it, but I do. I know all about Tropical Emerald . . . and, what's worse, I know that you know. You know it's crooked. You know Rip Hanlon and Barney Lane are crooks. You're starting out on the easy-money trail. That's why I'm talking to you."

"But, Dad—"

"Don't interrupt. Please. Wait until I've finished. I've got a lot to tell you."

"But, Dad—"

"Don't interrupt. Please. Wait until I've finished. I've got a lot to tell you."

Hanvey watched spellbound as Roger Steele told his son the truth about himself. It was a grand and pitiful spectacle. A heart was laid bare—and tortured. The older man was cruel to himself. He told of what he had been: cardsharper, swindler, cheat! He painted a grim and ghastly picture; and through it all the lad sat forward in his chair, his boyish face tense with interest, his cheeks pallid.

And at length Roger Steele's story was concluded.

"That's all, son. I know I've dispelled a beautiful illusion, an illusion which meant even more to me than it did to you . . . because you always took it for granted. But I've put my head on the guillotine for your sake. I'm trying to save you from what I'm going through now. I'm trying to

keep this agony out of your life. I've been a crook, and I've been successful. I've lived easily and well. And today . . . I have nothing. Just exactly nothing. Until a few moments ago, I had you. Now, I haven't. I—I don't want to get too sentimental, but I want you to make this sacrifice of mine worth while. You're clean now. Your word is good with me. I want your word, Ted, that you'll stay straight and decent. . . ." He paused awkwardly, then made a hopeless gesture. "That's all, son."

There was a strained silence. Then Ted Steele rose. Queer how much he resembled his father as he moved across the room and stood beside the broken old man. The boy's powerful arm dropped across the other's shoulder.

"You have my word of honor, Dad!"

Roger Steele whirled. He looked into the face of his boy and knew that he had won.

There were tears in the eyes of Roger Steele, and he was not ashamed.

They said little more. Each of the three men knew that the clouds had been dispersed; the sacrifice had not been in vain. And finally Ted said that he must return to the office. He was going to notify Rip Hanlon and Barney Lane that he was through.

He left the room, and Jim Hanvey stepped into the corridor with him.

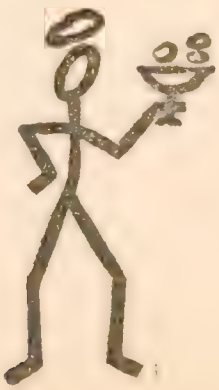
"Ted," he said, "I'm proud of you. You've done a big thing in a big way. . . . And even yet I don't think you quite appreciate all that it means to your father."

The boy nodded.

"Yes, I do, Mr. Hanvey," he answered quietly.

Ted stood silent for a minute.

"That was a brave thing my father did," he said suddenly. "It was wonderful. There were moments when I almost believed he was telling the truth!"



the crime of the communist

by . . . G. K. Chesterton

Why was a famous chemist talking nonsense? Could a distinguished man like him be involved in this?

THREE men came out from under the low-browed Tudor arch in the mellow façade of Mandeville College, into the strong evening sunlight of a summer day which seemed as if it would never end; and in that sunlight they saw something that blasted like lightning; well-fitted to be the shock of their lives.

Even before they had realized anything in the way of a catastrophe, they were conscious of a contrast. They themselves, in a curious quiet way, were quite harmonious with their surroundings. Though the Tudor arches that ran like a cloister round the college gardens had been built four hundred years ago, at that moment when the Gothic fell from heaven and bowed, or almost crouched, over the cosier chambers of Humanism and the Revival of Learning—though they themselves were in modern clothes (that is in clothes whose ugliness would have amazed any of the four centuries) yet something in the spirit of the place made them all at one.

The gardens had been tended

Father Brown didn't like the looks of the men—they looked much too much like the tailor's dummies. This was understandable, since they were very dead. To paraphrase R. T. Bond, Chesterton — poet, essayist and distinguished English writer—gave the crime story seriousness and validity at a time when it might have drifted into romantic theatricalism and pseudo-science.

From: THE SCANDAL OF FATHER BROWN
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so carefully as to achieve the final triumph of looking careless; the very flowers seemed beautiful by accident, like elegant weeds; and the modern costumes had at least any picturesqueness that can be produced by being untidy.

The first of the three, a tall, bald, bearded maypole of a man, was a familiar figure in the Quad in cap and gown; the gown slipped off one of his sloping shoulders. The second was very square-shouldered, short and compact, with a rather jolly grin, commonly clad in a jacket, with his gown over his arm. The third was even shorter and much shabbier, in black clerical clothes. But they all seemed suitable to Mandeville College; and the indescribable atmosphere of the two ancient and unique Universities of England. They fitted into it and they faded into it: which is there regarded as most fitting.

The two men seated on garden chairs by a little table were a sort of brilliant blot on this gray-green landscape. They were clad mostly in black and yet they glittered from head to heel, from their burnished top-hats to their perfectly polished boots. It was dimly felt as an outrage that anybody should be so well-dressed in the well-bred freedom of Mandeville College. The only excuse was that they were foreigners. One was an American, a millionaire named Hake, dressed in the spotlessly and sparklingly gentlemanly manner known only to the rich of New York. The other, who added to all these things the outrage of an astrakhan overcoat (to say nothing of a pair of florid whiskers) was a German Count of great wealth, the shortest part of whose name was Von Zimmern.

The mystery of this story, however, is not the mystery of why they were there. They were there for the reason that commonly explains the meeting of incongruous things; they proposed to give the college some money. They had come in support of a plan supported by several financiers and magnates of many countries, for founding a new Chair of Economics at Mandeville College. They had inspected the college with that tireless conscientious sightseeing of which no sons of Eve are capable except the American and the German. And now they were resting from their labors and looking solemnly at the college gardens. So far so good.

The three other men, who had already met them, passed with a vague salutation; but one of them stopped; the smallest of the three, in the black clerical clothes.

"I say," he said, with rather the air of a frightened rabbit, "I don't like the look of those men."

"Good God! Who could!" ejaculated the tall man, who happened to be the Master of Mandeville. "At least we have some rich men who don't go about dressed up like tailors' dummies."

"Yes," hissed the little cleric, "that's what I mean. Like tailors' dummies."

"Why, what do you mean?" asked the shorter of the other men, sharply.

"I mean they're like horrible waxworks," said the cleric in a faint voice. "I mean they don't move. Why don't they move?"

Suddenly starting out of his dim retirement, he darted across the garden and touched the German Baron on the elbow. The German Baron fell over, chair and all, and the trousered legs that stuck up in the air were as stiff as the legs of the chair.

Mr. Gideon P. Hake continued to gaze at the college gardens with glassy eyes; but the parallel of a waxwork confirmed the impression that they were like eyes made of glass. Somehow the rich sunlight and the colored garden increased the creepy impression of a stiffly dressed doll; a marionette on an Italian stage.

The small man in black, who was a priest named Brown, tentatively touched the millionaire on the shoulder, and the millionaire fell sideways, but horribly all of a piece, like something carved in wood.

"*Rigor mortis,*" said Father Brown, "and so soon. But it does vary a good deal."

The reason the first three men had joined the other two men so late (not to say too late) will best be understood by noting what had happened just inside the building, behind the Tudor archway, but a short time before they came out. They had all dined together in Hall, at the High Table; but the two foreign philanthropists, slaves of duty in the matter of seeing everything, had solemnly gone back to the chapel, of which one cloister and a staircase remained unexamined; promising to rejoin the rest in the garden, to examine as earnestly the college cigars. The rest, in a more reverent and right-minded spirit, had adjourned as usual to the long narrow oak table, round which the after-dinner wine had circulated, for all anybody knew, ever since the college had been founded in the Middle Ages by Sir John Mandeville, for the encouragement of telling stories.

The Master, with the big fair beard and the bald brow, took the head of the table, and the squat man in the square jacket sat on his left; for he was the Bursar or business man of the college. Next to him, on that side of the table, sat a queer-looking man with what could only be called a crooked face; for its dark tufts of moustache and eyebrow, slanting at contrary angles, made a sort of zig-zag, as if half his face were puckered or paralyzed. His name was Byles; he was the lecturer in Roman History, and his political opinions were founded on those of Coriolanus, not to mention Tarquinius Superbus. This tart Toryism, and rabidly reactionary

view of all current problems, was not altogether unknown among the more old-fashioned sort of dons; but in the case of Byles there was a suggestion that it was a result rather than a cause of his acerbity. More than one sharp observer had received the impression that there was something really wrong with Byles; that some secret or great misfortune had embittered him; as if that half-withered face had really been blasted like a storm-stricken tree.

Beyond him again sat Father Brown and at the end of the table a Professor of Chemistry, large and blond and bland, with eyes that were sleepy and perhaps a little sly. It was well known that this natural philosopher regarded the other philosophers, of a more classical tradition, very much as old fogies. On the other side of the table, opposite Father Brown, was a very swarthy and silent young man, with a black pointed beard, introduced because somebody had insisted on having a Chair of Persian; opposite the sinister Byles was a very mild-looking little Chaplain, with a head like an egg. Opposite the Bursar, and at the right hand of the Master, was an empty chair; and there were many there who were glad to see it empty.

"I don't know whether Craken is coming," said the Master, not without a nervous glance at the chair, which contrasted with the usual languid freedom of his demeanor. "I believe in giving people a lot of rope myself; but I confess I've reached the point of being glad when he is here, merely because he isn't anywhere else."

"Never know what he'll be up to next," said the Bursar cheerfully, "especially when he's instructing the young."

"A brilliant fellow, but fiery of course," said the Master, with a rather abrupt relapse into reserve.

"Fireworks are fiery, and also brilliant," growled old Byles, "but I don't want to be burned in my bed so that Craken can figure as a real Guy Fawkes."

"Do you really *think* he would join a physical force revolution, if there were one?" asked the Bursar smiling.

"Well, *he* thinks he would," said Byles sharply. "Told a whole hall full of undergraduates the other day that nothing now could avert the Class War turning into a real war, with killing in the streets of the town; and it didn't matter, so long as it ended in Communism and the victory of the working-class."

"The Class War," mused the Master, with a sort of distaste mellowed by distance; for he had known William Morris long ago and been familiar enough with the more artistic and leisurely Socialists. "I never can understand all this about the Class War. When I was young, Socialism was supposed to mean saying that there are no classes."

" 'Nother way of saying that Socialists are no class," said Byles with sour relish.

"Of course, you'd be more against them than I should," said the Master thoughtfully, "but I suppose my Socialism is almost as old-fashioned as your Toryism. Wonder what our young friends really think. What do you think, Baker?" he said abruptly to the Bursar on his left.

"Oh, I *don't* think, as the vulgar saying is," said the Bursar laughing. "You must remember I'm a very vulgar person. I'm not a thinker. I'm only a business man; and as a business man I think it's all bosh. You can't make men equal and it's damned bad business to pay them equal; especially a lot of them not worth paying for at all. Whatever it is, you've got to take the practical way out, because it's the only way out. It's not our fault if nature made everything a scramble."

"I agree with you there," said the Professor of Chemistry, speaking with a lisp that seemed childish in so large a man. "Communism pretends to be oh so modern; but it is not. Throw-back to the superstitions of monks and primitive tribes. A scientific government, with a really ethical responsibility to posterity, would be always looking for the line of promise and progress; not levelling and flattening it all back into the mud again. Socialism is sentimentalism; and more dangerous than a pestilence, for in that at least the fittest would survive."

The Master smiled a little sadly. "You know you and I will never feel quite the same about differences of opinion. Didn't somebody say up here, about walking with a friend by the river, 'Not differing much, except in opinion'? Isn't that the motto of a university? To have hundreds of opinions and not be opinionated. If people fall here, it's by what they are, not what they think. Perhaps I'm a relic of the eighteenth century; but I incline to the old sentimental heresy, 'For forms of faith let graceless zealots fight; he can't be wrong whose life is in the right.' What do you think about that, Father Brown?"

He glanced a little mischievously across at the priest and was mildly startled. For he had always found the priest very cheerful and amiable and easy to get on with; and his round face was mostly solid with good humor. But for some reason the priest's face at this moment was knotted with a frown much more sombre than any the company had ever seen on it; so that for an instant that commonplace countenance actually looked darker and more ominous than the haggard face of Byles. An instant later the cloud seemed to have passed; but Father Brown still spoke with a certain sobriety and firmness.

"I don't believe in that, anyhow," he said shortly. "How can

his life be in the right, if his whole view of life is wrong? That's a modern muddle that arose because people didn't know how much views of life can differ. Baptists and Methodists knew they didn't differ very much in morality; but then they didn't differ very much in religion or philosophy. It's quite different when you pass from the Baptists to the Anabaptists; or from the Theosophists to the Thugs. Heresy always does affect morality, if it's heretical enough. I suppose a man may honestly believe that thieving isn't wrong. But what's the good of saying that he honestly believes in dishonesty?"

"Damned good," said Byles with a ferocious contortion of feature, believed by many to be meant for a friendly smile. "And that's why I object to having a Chair of Theoretical Thieving in this college."

"Well, you're all very down on Communism, of course," said the Master, with a sigh. "But do you really think there's so much of it to be down on? Are any of your heresies really big enough to be dangerous?"

"I think they have grown so big," said Father Brown gravely, "that in some circles they are already taken for granted. They are actually unconscious. That is, without conscience."

"And the end of it," said Byles, "will be the ruin of this country."

"The end will be something worse," said Father Brown.

A shadow shot or slid rapidly along the panelled wall opposite, as swiftly followed by the figure that had flung it; a tall but stooping figure with a vague outline like a bird of prey; accentuated by the fact that its sudden appearance and swift passage were like those of a bird startled and flying from a bush. It was only the figure of a long-shouldered man with long drooping moustaches, in fact, familiar enough to them all; but something in the twilight and candlelight and the flying and streaking shadow connected it strangely with the priest's unconscious words of omen; for all the world as if those words had indeed been an augury, in the old Roman sense; and the sign of it the flight of a bird. Perhaps Mr. Byles might have given a lecture on such Roman augury; and especially on that bird of ill-omen.

The tall man shot along the wall like his own shadow until he sank into the empty chair on the Master's right, and looked across at the Bursar and the rest with hollow and cavernous eyes. His hanging hair and moustache were quite fair, but his eyes were so deep-set that they might have been black. Everyone knew, or could guess, who the newcomer was; but an incident instantly followed that sufficiently illuminated the situation.

The Professor of Roman His-

tory rose stiffly to his feet and stalked out of the room, indicating with little *finesse* his feelings about sitting at the same table with the Professor of Theoretical Thieving, otherwise the Communist, Mr. Craken.

The Master of Mandeville covered the awkward situation with nervous grace. "I was defending you, or some aspects of you, my dear Craken," he said smiling, "though I am sure you would find me quite indefensible. After all, I can't forget that the old Socialist friends of my youth had a very fine ideal of fraternity and comradeship. William Morris put it all in a sentence, 'Fellowship is heaven; and lack of fellowship is hell.' "

"Dons as Democrats; see headline," said Mr. Craken rather disagreeably. "And is Hard-Case Hake going to dedicate the new Commercial Chair to the memory of William Morris?"

"Well," said the Master, still maintaining a desperate geniality, "I hope we may say, in a sense, that all our Chairs are Chairs of good-fellowship."

"Yes; that's the academic version of the Morris maxim," growled Craken. " 'A Fellowship is heaven; and lack of a Fellowship is hell.' "

"Don't be so cross, Craken," interposed the Bursar briskly. "Take some port. Tenby, pass the port to Mr. Craken."

"Oh, well, I'll have a glass," said the Communist Professor a little less ungraciously. "I really came down here to have a smoke in the garden. Then I looked out of the window and saw your two precious millionaires were actually blooming in the garden; fresh, innocent buds. After all, it might be worthwhile to give them a bit of my mind."

The Master had risen under cover of his last conventional cordiality, and was only too glad to leave the Bursar to do his best with the Wild Man. Others had risen, and the groups at the table had begun to break up; and the Bursar and Mr. Craken were left more or less alone at the end of the long table. Only Father Brown continued to sit staring into vacancy with a rather cloudy expression.

"Oh, as to that," said the Bursar. "I'm pretty tired of them myself, to tell the truth; I've been with them the best part of a day going into facts and figures and all the business of this new Professorship. But look here, Craken," and he leaned across the table and spoke with a sort of soft emphasis, "you really needn't cut up so rough about this new Professorship. It doesn't really interfere with your subject.

"You're the only Professor of Political Economy at Mandeville and, though I don't pretend to agree with your notions, everybody knows you've got a European reputation. This is a special

subject they call Applied Economics. Well, even today, as I told you, I've had a hell of a lot of Applied Economics. In other words, I've had to talk business with two business men. Would you particularly want to do that? Would you envy it? Would you stand it? Isn't that evidence enough that there is a separate subject and may well be a separate Chair?"

"Good God," cried Craken with the intense invocation of the atheist. "Do you think I don't want to apply Economics? Only, when we apply it, you call it red ruin and anarchy; and when you apply it, I take the liberty of calling it exploitation. If only you fellows would apply Economics, it's just possible that people might get something to eat. We are the practical people; and that's why you're afraid of us. That's why you have to get two greasy Capitalists to start another Lectureship; just because I've let the cat out of the bag."

"Rather a wild cat, wasn't it," said the Bursar smiling, "that you let out of the bag?"

"And rather a gold-bag, wasn't it," said Craken, "that you are tying the cat up in again?"

"Well, I don't suppose we shall ever agree about all that," said the other. "But those fellows have come out of their chapel into the garden; and if you want to have your smoke there, you'd better come." He watched with some amusement his companion fumbling in all his pockets till he produced a pipe, and then, gazing at it with an abstracted air, Craken rose to his feet, but even in doing so, seemed to be feeling all over himself again. Mr. Baker, the Bursar, ended the controversy with a happy laugh of reconciliation. "You are the practical people, and you will blow up the town with dynamite. Only you'll probably forget the dynamite, as I bet you've forgotten the tobacco. Never mind, take a fill of mine. Matches?" He threw a tobacco-pouch and its accessories across the table; to be caught by Mr. Craken with that dexterity never forgotten by a cricketer, even when he adopts opinions generally regarded as not cricket. The two men rose together; but Baker could not forbear remarking, "Are you really the only practical people? Isn't there anything to be said for the Applied Economics, that remembers to carry a tobacco-pouch as well as a pipe?"

Craken looked at him with smouldering eyes; and said at last, after slowly draining the last of his wine:

"Let's say there's another sort of practicality. I dare say I do forget details and so on. What I want you to understand is this" —he automatically returned the pouch; but his eyes were far away and jet-burning, almost terrible— "because the inside of our intellect has changed, because we really

have a new idea of right, we shall do things you think really wrong. And they will be very practical."

"Yes," said Father Brown, suddenly coming out of his trance. "That's exactly what I said."

He looked across at Craken with a glassy and rather ghastly smile, saying: "Mr. Craken and I are in complete agreement."

"Well," said Baker, "Craken is going out to smoke a pipe with the plutocrats; but I doubt whether it will be a pipe of peace."

He turned rather abruptly and called to an aged attendant in the background. Mandeville was one of the last of the very old-fashioned colleges; and even Craken was one of the first of the Communists; before the Bolshevism of today. "That reminds me," the Bursar was saying, "as you won't hand round your peace pipe, we must send out the cigars to our distinguished guests. If they're smokers they must be longing for a smoke; for they've been nosing about in the chapel since feeding-time."

Craken exploded with a savage and jarring laugh. "Oh, I'll take them their cigars," he said. "I'm only a proletarian."

Baker and Brown and the attendant were all witnesses to the fact that the Communist strode furiously into the garden to confront the millionaires; but nothing more was seen or heard of them until, as is already recorded, Father Brown found them dead in their chairs.

It was agreed that the Master and the priest should remain to guard the scene of tragedy, while the Bursar, younger and more rapid in his movements, ran off to fetch doctors and policemen. Father Brown approached the table on which one of the cigars had burned itself away all but an inch or two; the other had dropped from the hand and been dashed out into dying sparks on the crazy-pavement.

The Master of Mandeville sat down rather shakily on a sufficiently distant seat and buried his bald brow in his hands. Then he looked up at first rather wearily; and then he looked very startled indeed and broke the stillness of the garden with a word like a small explosion of horror.

There was a certain quality about Father Brown which might sometimes be called blood-curdling. He always thought about what he was doing and never about whether it was done; he would do the most ugly or horrible or undignified or dirty things as calmly as a surgeon. There was a certain blank, in his simple mind, of all those things commonly associated with being superstitious or sentimental.

He sat down on the chair from which the corpse had fallen, picked up the cigar the corpse had partially smoked, carefully detached the ash, examined the butt-end

and then stuck it in his mouth and lit it. It looked like some obscene and grotesque antic in derision of the dead; and it seemed to him to be the most ordinary common sense.

A cloud floated upwards like the smoke of some savage sacrifice and idolatry; but to Father Brown it appeared a perfectly self-evident fact that the only way to find out what a cigar is like is to smoke it. Nor did it lessen the horror for his old friend, the Master of Mandeville, to have a dim but shrewd guess that Father Brown was, upon the possibilities of the case, risking his own life.

"No; I think that's all right," said the priest, putting the stump down again. "Jolly good cigars. Your cigars. Not American or German. I don't think there's anything odd about the cigar itself; but they'd better take care of the ashes. These men were poisoned somehow with the sort of stuff that stiffens the body quickly. . . . By the way, there goes somebody who knows more about it than we do."

The Master sat up with a curiously uncomfortable jolt; for indeed the large shadow which had fallen across the pathway preceded a figure which, however heavy, was almost as soft-footed as a shadow. Professor Wadham, eminent occupant of the Chair of Chemistry, always moved very quietly in spite of his size, and there was nothing odd about his strolling in the garden; yet there seemed something unnaturally neat in his appearing at the exact moment when chemistry was mentioned.

Professor Wadham prided himself on his quietude; some would say his insensibility. He did not turn a hair on his flattened flaxen head, but stood looking down at the dead men with a shade of something like indifference on his large froglike face. Only when he looked at the cigar-ash, which the priest had preserved, he touched it with one finger; then he seemed to stand even stiller than before; but in the shadow of his face his eyes for an instant seemed to shoot out telescopically like one of his own microscopes. He had certainly realized or recognized something; but he said nothing.

"I don't know where anyone is to begin in this business," said the Master.

"I should begin," said Father Brown, "by asking where these unfortunate men had been most of the time today."

"They were messing about in my laboratory for a good time," said Wadham, speaking for the first time. "Baker often comes up to have a chat, and this time he brought his two patrons to inspect my department. But I think they went everywhere; real tourists. I know they went to the chapel and even into the tunnel under the crypt, where you have to light candles; instead of digesting their

food like sane men. Baker seems to have taken them everywhere."

"Were they interested in anything particular in your department?" asked the priest. "What were you doing there just then?"

The Professor of Chemistry murmured a chemical formula beginning with "sulphate," and ending with something that sounded like "silenium"; unintelligible to both his hearers. He then wandered wearily away and sat on a remote bench in the sun, closing his eyes, but turning up his large face with heavy forbearance.

At this point, by a sharp contrast, the lawns were crossed by a brisk figure travelling as rapidly and as straight as a bullet; and Father Brown recognized the neat black clothes and shrewd dog-like face of a police-surgeon whom he had met in the poorer parts of the town. He was the first to arrive of the official contingent.

"Look here," said the Master to the priest, before the doctor was within earshot, "I must know something. Did you mean what you said about Communism being a real danger and leading to crime?"

"Yes," said Father Brown smiling rather grimly, "I have really noticed the spread of some Communist ways and influences; and, in one sense, this is a Communist crime."

"Thank you," said the Master. "Then I must go off and see to something at once. Tell the authorities I'll be back in ten minutes."

The Master had vanished into one of the Tudor archways at just about the moment when the police-doctor had reached the table and cheerfully recognized Father Brown. On the latter's suggestion that they should sit down at the tragic table, Dr. Blake threw one sharp and doubtful glance at the big, bland and seemingly somnolent chemist, who occupied a more remote seat.

He was duly informed of the Professor's identity, and what had so far been gathered of the Professor's evidence; and listened to it silently while conducting a preliminary examination of the dead bodies. Naturally, he seemed more concentrated on the actual corpses than on the hearsay evidence, until one detail suddenly distracted him entirely from the science of anatomy.

"What did the Professor say he was working at?" he inquired.

Father Brown patiently repeated the chemical formula he did not understand.

"What?" snapped Dr. Blake, like a pistol-shot. "Gosh! This is pretty frightful!"

"Because it's poison?" inquired Father Brown.

"Because it's piffle," replied Dr. Blake. "It's simply nonsense. The Professor is quite a famous chemist. Why is a famous chemist deliberately talking nonsense?"

"Well, I think I know that

one," answered Father Brown mildly. "He is talking nonsense, because he is telling lies. He is concealing something; and he wanted specially to conceal it from these two men and their representatives."

The doctor lifted his eyes from the two men and looked across at the almost unnaturally immobile figure of the great chemist. He might almost have been asleep; a garden butterfly had settled upon him and seemed to turn his stillness into that of a stone idol. The large folds of his froglike face reminded the doctor of the hanging skins of a rhinoceros.

"Yes," said Father Brown, in a very low voice. "He is a wicked man."

"Damn it all!" shouted the doctor, suddenly moved to his very depths. "Do you mean that a great scientific man like that deals in murder?"

"Fastidious critics would have complained of his dealing in murder," said the priest dispassionately. "I don't say I'm very fond of people dealing in murder in that way myself. But what's much more to the point—I'm sure that *these* poor fellows were among his fastidious critics."

"You mean they found his secret and he silenced them?" said Blake frowning. "But what in hell was his secret? How could a man murder on a large scale in a place like this?"

"I have told you his secret," said the priest. "It is a secret of the soul. He is a bad man. For heaven's sake don't fancy I say that because he and I are of opposite schools or traditions. I have a crowd of scientific friends; and most of them are heroically disinterested. Even of the most skeptical, I would only say they are rather irrationally disinterested. But now and then you do get a man who is a materialist, in the sense of a beast. I repeat he's a bad man. Much worse than—" And Father Brown seemed to hesitate for a word.

"You mean much worse than the Communist?" suggested the other.

"No; I mean much worse than the murderer," said Father Brown.

He got to his feet in an abstracted manner; and hardly realized that his companion was staring at him.

"But didn't you mean," asked Blake at last, "that this Wadham is the murderer?"

"Oh, no," said Father Brown more cheerfully. "The murderer is a much more sympathetic and understandable person. He at least was desperate; and had the excuses of sudden rage and despair."

"Why," cried the doctor, "do you mean it was the Communist after all?"

It was at this very moment, appropriately enough, that the police officials appeared with an announcement that seemed to con-

clude the case in a most decisive and satisfactory manner. They had been somewhat delayed in reaching the scene of the crime, by the simple fact that they had already captured the criminal. Indeed, they had captured him almost at the gates of their own official residence. They had already had reason to suspect the activities of Craken the Communist during various disorders in the town; when they heard of the outrage they felt it safe to arrest him; and found the arrest thoroughly justified. For, as Inspector Cook radiantly explained to dons and doctors on the lawn of Mandeville garden, no sooner was the notorious Communist searched, then it was found that he was actually carrying a box of poisoned matches.

The moment Father Brown heard the word "matches," he jumped from his seat as if a match had been lighted under him.

"Ah," he cried, with a sort of universal radiance, "and now it's all clear."

"What do you mean by all clear?" demanded the Master of Mandeville, who had returned in all the pomp of his own officialism to match the pomp of the police officials now occupying the college like a victorious army. "Do you mean you are convinced now that the case against Craken is clear?"

"I mean that Craken is cleared," said Father Brown firmly, "and the case against Craken is cleared away. Do you really believe Craken is the kind of man who would go about poisoning people with matches?"

"That's all very well," replied the Master, with the troubled expression he had never lost since the first sensation occurred. "But it was you yourself who said that fanatics with false principles may do wicked things. For that matter, it was you yourself who said that Communism is cropping up everywhere and Communist habits spreading."

Father Brown laughed in a rather shamefaced manner.

"As to the last point," he said, "I suppose I owe you all an apology. I seem to be always making a mess of things with my silly little jokes."

"Jokes!" repeated the Master, staring rather indignantly.

"Well," explained the priest, rubbing his head. "When I talked about a Communist habit spreading, I only meant a habit I happen to have noticed about two or three times even today. It is a Communist habit by no means confined to Communists. It is the extraordinary habit of so many men, especially Englishmen, of putting other people's match-boxes in their pockets without remembering to return them. Of course, it seems an awfully silly little trifle to talk about. But it does happen to be the way the crime was committed."

"It sounds to me quite crazy," said the doctor.

"Well, if almost any man may forget to return matches, you can bet your boots that Craken would forget to return them. So the poisoner who had prepared the matches got rid of them on to Craken, by the simple process of lending them and not getting them back. A really admirable way of shedding responsibility; because Craken himself would be perfectly unable to imagine where he had got them from. But when he used them quite innocently to light the cigars he offered to our two visitors, he was caught in an obvious trap; one of those too obvious traps. He was the bold bad Revolutionist murdering two millionaires."

"Well, who else would want to murder them?" growled the doctor.

"Ah, who indeed?" replied the priest; and his voice changed to much greater gravity. "There we come to the other thing I told you; and that, let me tell you, was not a joke. I told you that heresies and false doctrines had become common and conversational; that everybody was used to them; that nobody really noticed them. Did you think I meant *Communism* when I said that? Why, it was just the other way. You were all as nervous as cats about Communism; and you watched Craken like a wolf. Of course, Communism is a heresy; but it isn't a heresy that you people take for granted. It is Capitalism you take for granted; or rather the vices of Capitalism disguised as a dead Darwinism. Do you recall what you were all saying in the Common Room, about life being only a scramble, and nature demanding the survival of the fittest, and how it doesn't matter whether the poor are paid justly or not? Why *that* is the heresy that you have grown accustomed to, my friends; and it's every bit as much a heresy as Communism. That's the anti-Christian morality or immorality that you take quite naturally. And that's the immorality that has made a man a murderer today."

"What man?" cried the Master, and his voice cracked with a sudden weakness.

"Let me approach it another way," said the priest placidly. "You all talk as if Craken ran away; but he didn't. When the two men toppled over, he ran down the street, summoned the doctor merely by shouting through the window, and shortly afterwards was trying to summon the police. That was how he was arrested. But doesn't it strike you, now one comes to think of it, that Mr. Baker, the Bursar, is rather a long time looking for the police?"

"What is he doing then?" asked the Master sharply..

"I fancy he's destroying papers; or perhaps ransacking these men's rooms to see they haven't left us

a letter. Or it may have something to do with our friend Wadham. Where does he come in? That is really very simple and a sort of joke too. Mr. Wadham is experimenting in poisons for the next war; and has something of which a whiff of flame will stiffen a man dead. Of course, he has nothing to do with killing these men; but he did conceal his chemical secret for a very simple reason. One of them was a Puritan Yankee and the other very cosmopolitan, and those two types are often fanatical Pacifists. They would have called it planning murder and probably refused to help the college. But Baker was a friend of Wadham and it was easy for him to dip matches in the new material."

Another peculiarity of the little priest was that his mind was all of a piece, and he was unconscious of many incongruities; he would change the note of his talk from something quite public to something quite private, without any particular embarrassment. On this occasion, he made most of the company stare with mystification, by beginning to talk to one person when he had just been talking to ten; quite indifferent to the fact that only the one could have any notion of what he was talking about.

"I'm sorry if I misled you, doctor, by that maundering metaphysical digression on the man of sin," he said apologetically. "Of course it had nothing to do with the murder; but the truth is I'd forgotten all about the murder for the moment. I'd forgotten everything, you see, but a sort of vision of that fellow, with his vast unhuman face, squatting among the flowers like some blind monster of the Stone Age. And I was thinking that some men are pretty monstrous, like men of stone; but it was all irrelevant. Being bad inside has very little to do with committing crimes outside. The worst criminals have committed no crimes. The practical point is why did the practical criminal commit this crime. Why did Baker, the Bursar, want to kill these men? That's all that concerns us now. The answer is the answer to the question I've asked twice. Where were these men most of the time, apart from nosing in chapels or laboratories? By the Bursar's own account, they were talking business with the Bursar.

"Now, with all respect to the dead, I do not exactly grovel before the intellect of these two financiers. Their views on economics and ethics were heathen and heartless. Their views on Peace were tosh. Their views on Port were even more deplorable. But one thing they did understand; and that was business. And it took them a remarkably short time to discover that the business man in charge of the funds of this college was a swindler. Or shall I say, a true follower of the doctrine of

the unlimited struggle for life and the survival of the fittest."

"You mean they were going to expose him and he killed them before they could speak," said the doctor frowning. "There are a lot of details I don't understand."

"There are some details I'm not sure of myself," said the priest frankly. "I suspect all that business of candles underground had something to do with abstracting the millionaire's own matches, or perhaps making sure they had no matches. But I'm sure of the main gesture, the gay and careless gesture of Baker tossing his matches to the careless Craken. That gesture was the murderous blow."

"There's one thing I don't understand," said the Inspector. "How did Baker know that Craken wouldn't light up himself then and there at the table and become an unwanted corpse?"

The face of Father Brown became almost heavy with reproach; and his voice had a sort of mournful yet generous warmth in it.

"Well, hang it all," he said, "he was only an atheist."

"I'm afraid I don't know what you mean," said the Inspector, politely.

"He only wanted to abolish God," explained Father Brown in a temperate and reasonable tone. "He only wanted to destroy the Ten Commandments and root up all the religion and civilization that had made him, and wash out all the common sense of ownership and honesty; and let his culture and his country be flattened out by savages from the ends of the earth. That's all he wanted. You have no right to accuse him of anything beyond that. Hang it all, everybody draws the line somewhere! And you come here and calmly suggest that a Mandeville Man of the old generation (for Craken was of the old generation, whatever his views) would have begun to smoke, or even strike a match, while he was still drinking the College Port, vintage of '08—no, no; men are not so utterly without laws and limits as all that! I was there! I saw him; he had not finished his wine, and you ask me why he did not *smoke!* No such anarchic question has ever shaken the arches of Mandeville College. . . . Funny place, Mandeville College. Funny place, Oxford. Funny place, England."

"But you haven't anything particular to do with Oxford?" asked the doctor curiously.

"I have to do with England," said Father Brown. "I come from there. And the funniest thing of all is that even if you love it and belong to it, you still can't make head or tail of it."

THE saint's RATINGS

Fishing in troubled waters—

that's what our reviewer has been doing. And come up with a mixed grill that ranges from a barracuda to some poor fish that are definitely small fry. If you dip into this catch you will be well advised to wear asbestos gloves. It seems that after a few frightened years of absence sex is again rearing its sleek head in the paper-backs. The unwary reader may find himself with more girls than guns if he doesn't buy with care, a victim of his own curiosity. Like the unwary diner who opened his Chinese fortune cake and read the inscription on the paper inside: HA, HA—you now have Asian flu!

OUR RATING SYSTEM:

Three haloes: Outstanding

Two haloes: Above average

One halo: Passable reading

A pitchfork: For the ashcan

A MAN OF AFFAIRS, by John D. MacDonald (Dell, 35¢)

Sex, Big Business, money and violent death, all stirred together by the master of slick prose and served piping hot. This is an overly-frank look at the way business execs operate behind the scenes, the whole thing set in the lush atmosphere of the Bahamas. Fun for all.

KILLER'S CHOICE, by Ed McBain (Permabooks, 25¢)

Things are never quiet in the 87th Precinct. As well as a chronicle of violence, this is a sort of do-it-yourself of police detection; join the cops and find the killer—all for a quarter.

VIOLENT HOURS, by Robert Walsh (Signet, 25¢)

Thin book, big type. The men are all tough, girls all know what beds are for. And justice triumphs. Brutally. With at least half the cast dead.

THE RICH AND THE DAMNED, by Richard Himmel (Gold Medal, 35¢)

Not for the children, not for the mystery fan, not for . . . well, let's face it. Not for *anyone* who wants something else besides raw sex in a book.

BABY MOLL, by Steve Brackeen (Crest Book, 25¢)

Title, cover and cover blurbs have nothing to do with the contents of this book. Neither should you.

the case of the widow

by . . . Margery Allingham

The dinner was simple and well cooked. There was no hint of the fears and the doubts of those present. . . .

THE second prettiest girl in Mayfair was thanking Superintendent Stanislaus Oates for the recovery of her diamond bracelet and the ring with the square-cut emerald in it, and Mr. Campion, who had accompanied her to the ceremony, was admiring her technique.

She was doing it very charmingly; so charmingly, in fact, that the superintendent's depressing little office had taken on an air of garden-party gaiety which it certainly did not possess in the ordinary way, while the superintendent himself had undergone an even more sensational change.

His long dyspeptic face was transformed by a blush of smug satisfaction and he quite forgot the short lecture he had prepared for his visitor on The Carelessness Which Tempts the Criminal, or its blunter version, Stupidity Which Earns Its Own Reward.

It was altogether a most gratifying scene, and Mr. Campion, seated in the visitor's chair, his long thin legs crossed and his pale eyes amused behind his horn-

The rather ageless Mr. Thistledown wondered if he might take young Mr. Campion into his confidence—and with this began the case of the widow, which revolved around a fifty-year-old port. The author's detective has been described as an "open defiance of the Sherlock Holmes tradition."

From: MR. CAMPION: CRIMINOLOGIST, by Margery Allingham
(Doubleday, 1937)
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rimmed spectacles, enjoyed it to the full.

Miss Leonie Peterhouse-Vaughn raised her remarkable eyes to the superintendent's slightly sheepish face and spoke with deep earnestness.

"I honestly think you're wonderful," she said.

Realizing that too much butter can have a disastrous effect on any dish, and not being at all certain of his old friend's digestive capabilities, Mr. Campion coughed.

"He has his failures, too," he ventured. "He's not omnipotent, you know. Just an ordinary man."

"Really?" said Miss Peterhouse-Vaughn with gratifying surprise.

"Oh, yes; well, we're only human, miss." The superintendent granted Mr. Campion a reproachful look. "Sometimes we have our little disappointments. Of course, on those occasions we call in Mr. Campion, here," he added with a flash of malice.

Leonie laughed prettily and Mr. Oates's ruffled fur subsided like a wave.

"Sometimes even he can't help us," he went on, encouraged, and, inspired, no doubt, by the theory that the greater the enemy the greater the honor, launched into an explanation perhaps not altogether discreet. "Sometimes we come up against a man in London today who's been responsible for more trouble than I can mention. We know him, we know where he lives, we could put our hands on him any moment of the day or night, but have we any proof against him? Could we hold him for ten minutes without getting into serious trouble for molesting a respectable citizen? Could we? Well, we couldn't."

Miss Peterhouse-Vaughn's expression of mystified interest was very flattering.

"This is incredibly exciting," she said. "Who is he—or mustn't you tell?"

The superintendent shook his head.

"Entirely against the regulations," he said regretfully, and then, on seeing her disappointment and feeling, no doubt, that his portentous declaration had fallen a little flat, he relented and made a compromise between his conscience and a latent vanity which Mr. Campion had never before suspected. "Well, I'll show you this," he conceded. "It's a very curious thing."

With Leonie's fascinated eyes upon him, he opened a drawer in his desk and took out a single sheet torn from a week-old London evening paper. A small advertisement in the Situations Vacant column was ringed with blue pencil. Miss Peterhouse-Vaughn took it eagerly and Mr. Campion got up lazily to read it over her shoulder.

WANTED: *Entertainer suitable for children's party. Good money offered to right man.*

Apply in person any evening. Widow, 13 Blakenham Gardens, W.1.

Leonie read the lines three times and looked up.

"But it seems quite ordinary," she said.

The superintendent nodded. "That's what any member of the public would think," he agreed, gracefully keeping all hint of condescension out of his tone. "And it would have escaped our notice too, except for one thing, and that's the name and address. You see, the man I was telling you about happens to live at 13 Blakenham Gardens."

"Is his name Widow? How queer!"

"No, miss, it's not." Oates looked uncomfortable, seeing the pitfall too late. "I ought not to be telling you this," he went on severely. "This gentleman—and we've got nothing we can pin on him, remember—is known as 'The Widow' to the criminal classes. That's why this paragraph interested us. As it stands it's an ad for a crook, and the fellow has the impudence to use his own address! Doesn't even hide it under a box number."

Mr. Campion eyed his old friend. He seemed mildly interested.

"Did you send someone along to answer it?" he inquired.

"We did." The superintendent spoke heavily. "Poor young Billings was kept there singing comic songs for three-quarters of an hour while W— I mean this fellow—watched him without a smile. Then he told him he'd go down better at a police concert."

Miss Peterhouse-Vaughn looked sympathetic.

"What a shame!" she said gravely, and Mr. Campion never admired her more.

"We sent another man," continued the superintendent, "but when he got there the servant told him the vacancy had been filled. We kept an eye on the place, too, but it wasn't easy. The whole crescent was a seething mass of would-be child entertainers."

"So you haven't an idea what he's up to?" Mr. Campion seemed amused.

"Not the faintest," Oates admitted. "We shall in the end, though; I'll lay my bottom dollar. He was the moving spirit in that cussed Featherstone case, you know, and we're pretty certain it was he who slipped through the police net in the Barking business."

Mr. Campion raised his eyebrows. "Blackmail and smuggling?" he said. "He seems to be a versatile soul, doesn't he?"

"He's up to anything," Oates declared. "Absolutely anything. I'd give a packet to get my hands on him. But what he wants with a kids' entertainer—if it is an entertainer he's after—I do not know."

"Perhaps he just wants to give a children's party?" suggested Miss Peterhouse-Vaughn and while the policeman was considering this possibility, evidently the one explanation which had not crossed his mind, she took her leave.

"I must thank you once again, Mr. Oates," she said. "I can't tell you how terribly, terribly clever I think you are, and how awfully grateful I am, and how frightfully careful I'll be in the future not to give you any more dreadful trouble."

It was a charming little speech in spite of her catastrophic adjectives and the superintendent beamed.

"It's been a pleasure, miss," he said.

As Mr. Campion handed her into her mother's Daimler he regarded her coldly.

"A pretty performance," he remarked. "Tell me, what do you say when a spark of genuine gratitude warms your nasty little heart? My poor Oates!"

Miss Peterhouse-Vaughn grinned.

"I did do it well, didn't I?" she said complacently. "He's rather a dear old goat."

Mr. Campion was shocked and said so.

"The superintendent is a distinguished officer. I always knew that, of course, but this afternoon I discovered a broad streak of chivalry in him. In his place I think I might have permitted myself a few comments on the type of young woman who leaves a diamond bracelet and an emerald ring in the soap dish at a public restaurant and then goes smiling to Scotland Yard to ask for it back. The wretched man had performed a miracle for you and you call him a dear old goat."

Leonie was young enough to look abashed without losing her charm.

"Oh, but I am grateful," she said. "I think he's wonderful. But not so absolutely brilliant as somebody else."

"That's very nice of you, my child," Mr. Campion prepared to unbend.

"Oh, not you, darling." Leonie squeezed his arm. "I was talking about the other man—The Widow. He's got real nerve, don't you think—using his own address and making the detective sing and all that . . . So amusing!"

Her companion looked down at her severely.

"Don't make a hero out of *him,*" he said.

"Why not?"

"Because my dear little hideous, he's a crook. It's only while he remains uncaught that he's faintly interesting. Sooner or later your elderly admirer, the superintendent, is going to clap him under lock and key and then he'll just be an ordinary convict, who is anything but romantic, believe me."

Miss Peterhouse-Vaughn shook her head.

"He won't get caught," she said. "Or if he does—forgive me, darling—it'll be by someone much cleverer than you or Mr. Oates."

Mr. Campion's professional pride rebelled.

"What'll you bet?"

"Anything you like," said Leonie. "Up to two pounds," she said prudently.

Campion laughed. "The girl's learning caution at last!" he said. "I may hold you to that."

The conversation changed to the charity matinee of the day before, wherein Miss Peterhouse-Vaughn had appeared as Wisdom, and continued its easy course, gravitating naturally to the most important pending event in the Peterhouse-Vaughn family, the christening of Master Brian Desmond Peterhouse - Vaughn, nephew to Leonie, son to her elder brother, Desmond Brian, and godson to Mr. Albert Campion.

It was his new responsibility as a godfather which led Mr. Campion to take part in yet another elegant little ceremony some few days after the christening and nearly three weeks after Leonie's sensational conquest of Superintendent Oates's susceptible heart.

Mr. Campion called to see Mr. Thistledown in Cheese Street, E.C., and they went reverently to the cellars together.

Mr. Thistledown was a small man, elderly and dignified. His white hair was inclined to flow a little and his figure was more suited, perhaps, to his vocation than to his name. As head of the small but distinguished firm of Thistledown, Friend and Son, Wine Importers since 1798, he very seldom permitted himself a personal interview with any client under the age of sixty-five, for at that year he openly believed the genus homo sapiens, considered solely as a connoisseur of vintage wine, alone attained full maturity.

Mr. Campion, however, was an exception. Mr. Thistledown considered him a lad still, but a promising one. He took his client's errand with all the gravity he felt it to deserve.

"Twelve dozen of port to be laid down for Master Brian Desmond Peterhouse-Vaughn," he said, rolling the words round his tongue as though they, too, had their flavor. "Let me see, it is now the end of '36. It will have to be a '27 wine. Then by the time your godson is forty—he won't want to drink it before that age, surely? —there should be a very fine fifty-year-old vintage awaiting him."

A long and somewhat heated discussion, or, rather, monologue, for Mr. Campion was sufficiently experienced to offer no opinion, followed. The relative merits of Croft, Taylor, De Silva, Noval and Fonseca were considered at

length, and in the end Mr. Campion followed his mentor through the sacred tunnels and personally affixed his seal upon a bin of Taylor, 1927.

Mr. Thistledown was in favor of a stipulation to provide that Master Peterhouse-Vaughn should not attain full control over his vinous inheritance until he attained the age of thirty, whereas Mr. Campion preferred the more conventional twenty-one. Finally, a compromise of twenty-five was agreed upon and the two gentlemen retired to Mr. Thistledown's consulting room glowing with the conscious virtue of men who had conferred a benefit upon posterity.

The consulting room was comfortable. It was really no more than an arbor of bottles constructed in the vault of the largest cellar and was furnished with a table and chairs of solid ship's timber. Mr. Thistledown paused by the table and hesitated before speaking. There was clearly something on his mind and Campion, who had always considered him slightly inhuman, a sort of living port crust, was interested.

When at last the old gentleman unburdened himself it was to make a short speech.

"It takes an elderly man to judge a port or a claret," he said, "but spirits are definitely in another category. Some men may live to be a hundred without ever realizing the subtle differences of the finest rums. To judge a spirit one must be born with a certain kind of palate. Mr. Campion, would you taste a brandy for me?"

His visitor was startled. Always a modest soul, he made no pretensions to connoisseurship and now he said so firmly.

"I don't know." Mr. Thistledown regarded him seriously. "I have watched your taste for some years now and I am inclined to put you down as one of the few really knowledgeable younger men. Wait for me a moment."

He went out, and through the arbor's doorway Campion saw him conferring with the oldest and most cobwebby of the troglodyte persons who lurked about the vaults.

Considerably flattered in spite of himself, he sat back and awaited developments. Presently one of the younger myrmidons, a mere youth of fifty or so, appeared with a tray and a small selection of balloon glasses. He was followed by an elder with two bottles, and at the rear of the procession came Mr. Thistledown himself with something covered by a large silk handkerchief. Not until they were alone did he remove the veil. Then, whipping the handkerchief aside, he produced a partly full half bottle with a new cork and no label. He held it up to the light and Mr. Campion saw that the liquid within was of the true dark amber.

Still with the ritualistic air, Mr.

Thistledown polished a glass and poured a tablespoon of the spirit, afterwards handing it to his client.

Feeling like a man with his honor at stake, Campion warmed the glass in his hand, sniffed at it intelligently, and finally allowed a little of the stuff to touch his tongue.

Mr. Thistledown watched him earnestly. Campion tasted again and inhaled once more. Finally he set down his glass and grinned.

"I may be wrong," he said, "but it tastes like the real McKay."

Mr. Thistledown frowned at the vulgarism. He seemed satisfied, however, and there was a curious mixture of pleasure and discomfort on his face.

"I put it down as Champagne Fine, 1835," he said. "It has not, perhaps, quite the superb caress of the true Napoleon—but a brave, yes, brave, brandy! The third best I have ever tasted in my life. And that, let me tell you, Mr. Campion, is a very extraordinary thing."

He paused, looking like some old white cockatoo standing at the end of the table.

"I wonder if I might take you into my confidence?" he ventured at last. "Ah—a great many people do take you into their confidence, I believe? Forgive me for putting it that way."

Campion smiled. "I'm as secret as the grave," he said, "and if there's anything I can do I shall be delighted."

Mr. Thistledown sighed with relief and became almost human.

"This confounded bottle was sent to me some little time ago," he said. "With it was a letter from a man called Gervaise Papulous; I don't suppose you've ever heard of him, but he wrote a very fine monograph on brandies some years ago which was greatly appreciated by connoisseurs. I had an idea he lived a hermit's life somewhere in Scotland, but that's neither here nor there. The fact remains that when I had this note from an address in Half Moon Street I recognized the name immediately. It was a very civil letter, asking me if I'd mind, as an expert, giving my opinion of the age and quality of the sample."

He paused and smiled faintly.

"I was a little flattered, perhaps," he said. "After all, the man is a well-known authority himself. Anyway, I made the usual tests, tasted it and compared it with the oldest and finest stuff we have in stock. We have a few bottles of 1848 and one or two of the 1835. I made the most careful comparisons and at last I decided that the sample was a '35 brandy, but not the same blend as our own. I wrote him; I said I did not care to commit myself, but I gave him my opinion for what it was worth and I appended my reasons for forming it."

Mr. Thistledown's precise voice ceased and his color heightened.

"By return I received a letter thanking me for mine and asking me whether I would care to consider an arrangement whereby I could buy the identical spirit in any quantity I cared to name at a hundred and twenty shillings a dozen, excluding duty—or in other words, ten shillings per bottle."

Mr. Campion sat up. "Ten shillings?" he said.

"Ten shillings," repeated Mr. Thistledown. "The price of a wireless license," he added with contempt. "Well, as you can imagine, Mr. Campion, I thought there must be some mistake. Our own '35 is listed at sixty shillings a bottle and you cannot get finer value anywhere in London. The stuff is rare. In a year or two it will be priceless. I considered this sample again and reaffirmed my own first opinion. Then I reread the letter and noticed the peculiar phrase—'an arrangement whereby you will be able to purchase.' I thought about it all day and finally I put on my hat and went down to see the man."

He glanced at his visitor almost timidly. Campion was reassuring.

"If it was genuine it was not a chance to be missed," he murmured.

"Exactly." Mr. Thistledown smiled. "Well, I saw him, a younger man than I had imagined but well informed and I received quite a pleasant impression. I asked him frankly where he got the brandy and he came out with an extraordinary suggestion. He asked me first if I was satisfied with the sample, and I said I was or I should hardly have come to see him. Then he said the whole matter was a secret at the moment, but that he was asking certain well-informed persons to a private conference and something he called a scientific experiment. Finally he offered me an invitation. It is to take place next Monday evening in a little hotel on the Norfolk coast where Mr. Papulous says the ideal conditions for his experiment exist."

Mr. Campion's interest was thoroughly aroused.

"I should go," he said.

Mr. Thistledown spread out his hands.

"I had thought of it," he admitted. "As I came out of the flat at Half Moon Street I passed a man I knew on the stairs. I won't mention his name and I won't say his firm is exactly a rival of ours, but—well, you know how it is. Two or three old firms get the reputation for supplying certain rare vintages. Their names are equally good and naturally there is a certain competition between them. If this fellow has happened on a whole cellar full of this brandy I should like to have as good a chance of buying it as the

next man, especially at the price. But in my opinion and in my experience that is too much to hope for, and that is why I have ventured to mention the matter to you."

A light dawned upon his client.

"You want me to attend the conference and make certain everything's aboveboard?"

"I hardly dared to suggest it," he said, "but since you are such an excellent judge, and since your reputation as an investigator—if I may be forgiven the term—is so great, I admit the thought did go through my mind."

Campion picked up his glass and sniffed its fragrance.

"My dear man, I'd jump at it," he said. "Do I pass myself off as a member of the firm?"

Mr. Thistledown looked owlish.

"In the circumstances I think we might connive at that little inexactitude," he murmured. "Don't you?"

"I think we'll have to," said Mr. Campion.

When he saw the "little hotel on the Norfolk coast" at half-past six on the following Monday afternoon the thought came to him that it was extremely fortunate for the proprietor that it should be so suitable for Mr. Papulous's experiment, for it was certainly not designed to be of much interest to an ordinary winter visitor. It was a large country public house, not old enough to be picturesque, standing by itself at the end of a lane some little distance from a cold and sleepy village. In the summer, no doubt, it provided a headquarters for a great many picnic parties, but in winter it was deserted.

Inside it was warm and comfortable enough, however, and Campion found a curious little company seated round the fire in the lounge. His host rose to greet him and he was aware at once of a considerable personality.

He saw a tall man with a shy ingratiating manner, whose clothes were elegant and whose face was remarkable. His deep-set eyes were dark and intelligent and his wide mouth could smile disarmingly, but the feature which was most distinctive was the way in which his iron-gray hair drew into a clean-cut peak in the center of his high forehead, giving him an odd, Mephistophelean appearance.

"Mr. Fellowes?" he said, using the alias Campion and Mr. Thistledown had agreed upon. "I heard from your firm this morning. Of course, I'm very sorry not to have Mr. Thistledown here. He says in his note that I am to regard you as his second self. You handle the French side, I understand?"

"Yes. It was only by chance that I was in England yesterday when Mr. Thistledown asked me to come."

"I see." Mr. Papulous seemed contented with the explanation. Campion looked a mild, inoffensive young man, even a little foolish.

He was introduced to the rest of the company round the fire and was interested to see that Mr. Thistledown had been right in his guess. Half a dozen of the best-known smaller and older wine firms were represented, in most cases by their senior partners.

Conversation, however, was not as general as might have been expected among men of such similar interests. On the contrary, there was a distinct atmosphere of restraint, and it occurred to Mr. Campion that they were all close rivals and each man had not expected to see the others.

Mr. Papulous alone seemed happily unconscious of any discomfort. He stood behind his chair at the head of the group and glanced round him with satisfaction.

"It's really very kind of you all to have come," he said in his deep musical voice. "Very kind indeed. I felt we must have experts, the finest experts in the world, to test this thing, because it's revolutionary — absolutely revolutionary."

A large old gentleman with a hint of superciliousness in his manner glanced up.

"When are we going to come to the horses, Mr. Papulous?"

His host turned to him with a depreciatory smile.

"Not until after dinner, I'm afraid, Mr. Jerome. I'm sorry to seem so secretive, but the whole nature of the discovery is so extraordinary that I want you to see the demonstration with your own eyes."

Mr. Jerome, whose name Campion recognized as belonging to the moving spirit of Bolitho Brothers, of St. Mary Axe, seemed only partly mollified. He laughed.

"Is it the salubrious air of this particular hotel that you need for your experiment, may I ask?" he inquired.

"Oh, no, my dear sir. It's the stillness." Mr. Papulous appeared to be completely oblivious of any suggestion of a sneer. "It's the utter quiet. At night, round about ten o'clock, there is a lack of vibration here, so complete that you can almost feel it, if I may use such a contradiction in terms. Now, Mr. Fellowes, dinner's at seven-thirty. Perhaps you'd care to see your room?"

Campion was puzzled. As he changed for the meal, a gesture which seemed to be expected of him, he surveyed the situation with growing curiosity. Papulous was no ordinary customer. He managed to convey an air of conspiracy and mystery while appearing himself as open and simple as the day. Whatever he was

up to he was certainly a good salesman.

The dinner was simple and well cooked and was served by Papulous's own man. There was no alcohol and the dishes were not highly seasoned, out of deference, their host explained, to the test that was to be put to their palates later on.

When it was over and the mahogany had been cleared of dessert, a glass of clear water was set before each guest and from the head of the table Mr. Papulous addressed his guests. He made a very distinguished figure, leaning forward across the polished wood, the candlelight flickering on his deeply lined face and high heart-shaped forehead.

"First of all let me recapitulate," he said. "You all know my name and you have all been kind enough to say that you have read my little book. I mention this because I want you to realize that by asking you down here to witness a most extraordinary demonstration I am taking my reputation in my hands. Having made that point, let me remind you that you have each of you, with the single exception of Mr. Fellowes, been kind enough to give me your considered views on a sample of brandy which I sent you. In every case, I need hardly mention, opinion was the same—a Champagne Fine of 1835."

A murmur of satisfaction not untinged with relief ran round the table and Mr. Papulous smiled.

"Well," he said, "frankly that would have been my own opinion had I not known—mark you, I say 'known'—that the brandy I sent you was a raw cognac of nearly a hundred years later—to be exact, of 1932."

There was a moment of bewilderment, followed by an explosion from Mr. Jerome.

"I hope you're not trying to make fools of us, sir," he said severely. "I'm not going to sit here, and—"

"One moment, one moment." Papulous spoke soothingly. "You really must forgive me. I know you all too well by repute to dare to make such a statement without following it immediately by the explanation to which you are entitled. As you're all aware, the doctoring of brandy is an old game. Such dreadful additions as vanilla and burnt sugar have all been used in their time and will, no doubt, be used again, but such crude deceptions are instantly detected by the cultured palate. This is something different."

Mr. Jerome began to seethe.

"Are you trying to interest us in a fake, sir?" he demanded. "Because, if so, let me tell you I for one am not interested."

There was a chorus of hasty assent in which Mr. Campion virtuously joined.

Gervaise Papulous smiled faintly.

"But of course not," he said. "We are all experts. The true expert knows that no fake can be successful, even should we so far forget ourselves as to countenance its existence. I am bringing you a discovery—not a trick, not a clever fraud, but a genuine discovery which may revolutionize the whole market. As you know, time is the principal factor in the maturing of spirits. Until now time has been the one factor which could not be artificially replaced. An old brandy, therefore, is quite a different thing from a new one."

Mr. Campion blinked. A light was beginning to dawn upon him.

Mr. Papulous continued. There seemed to be no stopping him. At the risk of boring his audience he displayed a great knowledge of technical detail and went through the life history of an old liqueur brandy from the time it was an unripe grapeskin on a vine outside Cognac.

When he had finished he paused dramatically, adding softly:

"What I hope to introduce to you tonight, gentlemen, is the latest discovery of science, a method of speeding up this long and wearisome process so that the whole business of maturing the spirit takes place in a few minutes instead of a hundred years. You have all examined the first fruits of this method already and have been interested enough to come down here. Shall we go on?"

The effect of his announcement was naturally considerable. Everybody began to talk at once save Mr. Campion, who sat silent and thoughtful. It occurred to him that his temporary colleagues were not only interested in making a great deal of money but very much alarmed at the prospect of losing a considerable quantity also.

"If it's true it'll upset the whole damned trade," murmured his next-door neighbor, a little thin man with wispy straw-colored hair.

Papulous rose. "In the next room the inventor, M. Philippe Jessant, is waiting to demonstrate," he said. "He began work on the idea during the period of prohibition in America and his researches were assisted there by one of the richest men in the world, but when the country was restored to sanity his patron lost interest in the work and he was left to perfect it unassisted. You will find him a simple, uneducated, unbusinesslike man, like many inventors. He came to me for help because he had read my little book and I am doing what I can for him by introducing him to you. Conditions are now ideal. The house is perfectly still. Will you come with me?"

The skeptical but excited little company filed into the large "commercial" room on the other side of the passage. The place had been stripped of furniture

save for a half-circle of chairs and a large deal table. On the table was a curious contraption, vaguely resembling two or three of those complicated coffee percolators which seemed to be designed solely for the wedding-present trade.

An excitable little man in a long brown overall was standing behind the table. If not an impressive figure, he was certainly an odd one, with his longish hair and gold-rimmed pince-nez.

"Quiet, please. I must beg of you quiet," he commanded, holding up his hand as they appeared. "We must have no vibration, no vibration at all, if I am to succeed."

He had a harsh voice and a curious foreign accent, which Campion could not instantly trace, but his manner was authoritative and the experts tiptoed gently to their seats.

"Now," said Mr. Jessant, his small eyes flashing, "I leave all explanations to my friend here. For me, I am only interested in the demonstration. You understand?"

He glared at them and Papulous hastened to explain.

"Mr. Jessant does not mean the human voice, of course," he murmured. "It is vibration, sudden movement, of which he is afraid."

"Quiet," cut in the inventor impatiently. "When a spirit matures in the ordinary way what does it have?—quiet, darkness, peace. These conditions are essential. Now we will begin, if you please."

It was a simple business. A clear-glass decanter of brandy was produced and duly smelt and sampled by each guest. Papulous himself handed round the glasses and poured the liquid. By unanimous consent it was voted a raw spirit. The years 1932 and 1934 were both mentioned.

Then the same decanter was emptied into the contraption on the table and its progress watched through a system of glass tubes and a filter into a large retort-shaped vessel at the foot of the apparatus.

M. Jessant looked up.

"Now," he said softly. "You will come, one at a time, please, and examine my invention. Walk softly."

The inspection was made and the man in the brown overall covered the retort with a hood composed of something that looked like black rubber. For a while he busied himself with thermometers and a little electric battery.

"It is going on now," he explained, suppressed excitement in his voice. "Every second roughly corresponds to a year—a long, dark, dismal year. Now—we shall see."

The hood was removed, fresh glasses brought, and the retort itself carefully detached from the rest of the apparatus.

Mr. Jerome was the first to examine the liquid it contained and his expression was ludicrous in its astonishment.

"It's incredible!" he said at last. "Incredible! I can't believe it. . . . There are certain tests I should like to make, of course, but I could swear this is an 1835 brandy."

The others were of the same opinion and even Mr. Campion was impressed. The inventor was persuaded to do his experiment again. To do him justice he complied willingly.

"It is the only disadvantage," he said. "So little can be treated at the one time. I tell my friend I should like to make my invention fool-proof and sell the machines and the instructions to the public, but he tells me no."

"No, indeed!" ejaculated Mr. Campion's neighbor. "Good heavens! it would knock the bottom out of half my trade . . ."

When at last the gathering broke up in excitement it was after midnight. Mr. Papulous addressed his guests.

"It is late," he said. "Let us go to bed now and consider the whole matter in the morning when M. Jessant can explain the theory of his process. Meanwhile, I am sure you will agree with me that we all have something to think about."

A somewhat subdued company trooped off upstairs. There was little conversation. A man does not discuss a revolutionary discovery with his nearest rival.

Campion came down in the morning to find Mr. Jerome already up. He was pacing the lounge and turned on the young man almost angrily.

"I like to get up at six," he said without preamble, "but there were no servants in the place. A woman, her husband and a maid came along at seven. It seems Papulous made them sleep out. Afraid of vibration, I suppose. Well, it's an extraordinary discovery, isn't it? If I hadn't seen it with my own eyes I should never have believed it. I suppose one's got to be prepared for progress, but I can't say I like it. Never did."

He lowered his voice and came closer.

"We shall have to get together and suppress it, you know," he said. "Only thing to do. We can't have a thing like this blurted out to the public and we can't have any single firm owning the secret. Anyway, that's my opinion."

Campion murmured that he did not care to express his own without first consulting Mr. Thistledown.

"Quite, quite. There'll be a good many conferences in the City this afternoon," said Mr. Jerome gloomily. "And that's another thing. D'you know there isn't a telephone in this confounded pub?"

Campion's eyes narrowed.

"Is that so?" he said softly. "That's very interesting."

Mr. Jerome shot him a suspicious glance.

"In my opinion . . ." he began heavily but got no further. The door was thrust open and the small wispy-haired man, who had been Campion's neighbor at dinner, came bursting into the room.

"I say," he said, "a frightful thing! The little inventor chap has been attacked in the night. His machine is smashed and the plans and formula are stolen. Poor old Papulous is nearly off his head."

Both Campion and Jerome started for the doorway and a moment later joined the startled group on the landing. Gervaise Papulous, an impressive figure in a long black dressing gown, was standing with his back to the inventor's door.

"This is terrible, terrible!" he was saying. "I beseech you all, go downstairs and wait until I see what is best to be done. My poor friend has only just regained consciousness."

Jerome pushed his way through the group.

"But this is outrageous," he began.

Papulous towered over him, his eyes dark and angry.

"It is just as you say, outrageous," he said, and Mr. Jerome quailed before the suppressed fury in his voice.

"Look here," he began, "you surely don't think . . . you're not insinuating . . ."

"I am only thinking of my poor friend," said Mr. Papulous.

Campion went quietly downstairs.

"What on earth does this mean?" demanded the small wispy-haired gentleman, who had remained in the lounge.

Campion grinned. "I rather fancy we shall all find that out pretty clearly in about an hour," he said.

He was right. Mr. Gervaise Papulous put the whole matter to them in the bluntest possible way as they sat dejectedly looking at the remains of what had proved a very unsatisfactory breakfast.

M. Jessant, his head in bandages and his face pale with exhaustion, had told a heartbreaking story. He had awakened to find a pad of chloroform across his mouth and nose. It was dark and he could not see his assailant, who also struck him repeatedly. His efforts to give the alarm were futile and in the end the anaesthetic had overpowered him.

When at last he had come to himself his apparatus had been smashed and his precious black pocketbook, which held his calculations and which he always kept under his pillow, had gone.

At this point he had broken down completely and had been led away by Papulous's man. Mr. Gervaise Papulous then took the floor. He looked pale and nervous

and there was an underlying suggestion of righteous anger and indignation in his manner which was very impressive.

"I won't waste time by telling you how appalled I am by this monstrous attack," he began, his fine voice trembling. "I can only tell you the facts. We were alone in this house last night. Even my own man slept out in the village. I arranged this to insure ideal conditions for the experiment. The landlady reports that the doors were locked this morning and the house had not been entered from the outside. Now you see what this means? Until last night only the inventor and I knew of the existence of a secret which is of such great importance to all of you here. Last night we told you, we took you into our confidence, and now . . ." he shrugged his shoulders. "Well, we have been robbed and my friend assaulted. Need I say more?"

An excited babble of protest arose and Mr. Jerome seemed in danger of apoplexy. Papulous remained calm and a little contemptuous.

"There is only one thing to do," he said, "but I hesitated before calling in the police, because, of course, only one of you can be guilty and the secret must still be in the house, whereas I know the publicity which cannot be avoided will be detrimental to you all. And not only to yourselves personally, but to the firms you represent."

He paused and frowned.

"The Press is so ignorant," he said. "I am so afraid you may all be represented as having come here to see some sort of faking process—new brandy into old. It doesn't sound convincing, does it?"

His announcement burst like a bomb in the quiet room. Mr. Jerome sat very still, his mouth partly open. Somebody began to speak but thought better of it. A long unhappy silence supervened.

Gervaise Papulous cleared his throat.

"I am sorry," he said. "I must either have my friend's notebook back and full compensation, or I must send for the police. What else can I do?"

Mr. Jerome pulled himself together.

"Wait," he said in a smothered voice. "Before you do anything rash we must have a conference. I've been thinking over this discovery of yours, Mr. Papulous, and in my opinion it raises very serious considerations for the whole trade."

There was a murmur of agreement in the room and he went on.

"The one thing none of us can afford is publicity. In the first place, even if the thing becomes generally known it certainly won't become generally believed. The public doesn't rely on its palate; it relies on our labels, and that puts

us in a very awkward position. This final development precipitates everything. We must clear up this mystery in private and then decide what is best to be done."

There was a vigorous chorus of assent, but Mr. Papulous shook his head.

"I'm afraid I can't agree," he said coldly. "In the ordinary way M. Jessant and I would have been glad to meet you in any way, but this outrage alters everything. I insist on a public examination unless, of course," he added deliberately, "unless you care to take the whole matter out of our hands."

"What do you mean?" Mr. Jerome's voice was faint.

The tall man with the deeply lined face regarded him steadily.

Unless you care to club together and buy us out," said Mr. Papulous. "Then you can settle the matter as you like. The sum M. Jessant had in mind was fifteen thousand pounds, a very reasonable price for such a secret."

There was silence after he had spoken.

"Blackmail," said Mr. Campion under his breath and at the same moment his glance lighted on Mr. Papulous's most outstanding feature. His eyebrows rose and an expression of incredulity, followed by amazement, passed over his face. Then he kicked himself gently under the breakfast table. He rose.

"I must send a wire to my principal," he said. "You'll understand I'm in an impossible position and must get in touch with Mr. Thistledown at once."

Papulous regarded him.

"If you will write your message my man will dispatch it from the village," he said politely and there was no mistaking the implied threat.

Campion understood he was not to be allowed to make any private communication with the outside world. He looked blank.

"Thank you," he said and took out a pencil and a loose-leaf notebook.

"Unexpected development," he wrote. "Come down immediately. Inform Charlie and George cannot lunch Tuesday. A. C. Fellowes."

Papulous took the message, read it and went out with it, leaving a horrified group behind him.

Mr. Thistledown received Mr. Campion's wire at eleven o'clock and read it carefully. The signature particularly interested him. Shutting himself in his private room, he rang up Scotland Yard and was fortunate in discovering Superintendent Oates at his desk. He dictated the wire carefully and added with a depreciatory cough:

"Mr. Campion told me to send on to you any message from him signed with his own initials. I don't know if you can make much

of this. It seems very ordinary to me."

"Leave all that to us, sir." Oates sounded cheerful. "Where is he, by the way?"

Mr. Thistledown gave the address and hung up the receiver. At the other end of the wire the superintendent unlocked a drawer in his desk and took out a small red manuscript book. Each page was ruled with double columns and filled with Mr. Campion's own elegant handwriting. Oates ran a forefinger down the left-hand column on the third page.

"Carrie . . . Catherine . . . Charles . . ."

His eye ran across the page.

"Someone you want," he read and looked on down the list.

The legend against the word "George" was brief. "Two" it said simply.

Oates turned to the back of the book. There were several messages under the useful word "lunch." "Come to lunch" meant "Send two men." "Lunch with me" was translated "Send men armed," and "Cannot lunch" was "Come yourself."

"Tuesday" was on another page. The superintendent did not trouble to look it up. He knew its meaning. It was "hurry."

He wrote the whole message out on a pad.

"Unexpected developments. Come down, immediately. Someone you want (two). Come yourself. Hurry. Campion."

He sighed. "Energetic chap," he commented and pressed a bell for Sergeant Bloom.

As it happened, it was Mr. Gervaise Papulous himself who caught the first glimpse of the police car which pulled up outside the lonely little hotel. He was standing by the window in an upper room whose floor was so flimsily constructed that he could listen with ease to the discussion taking place in the lounge below. There the unfortunate experts were still arguing. The only point on which they all agreed was the absolute necessity of avoiding a scandal.

As the car stopped and the superintendent sprang out and made for the door Papulous caught a glimpse of his official-looking figure. He swung round savagely to the forlorn little figure who sat hunched up on the bed.

"You peached, damn you!" he whispered.

"Me?" The man who had been calling himself "Jessant" sat up in indignation. "Me peach?" he repeated, his foreign accent fading into honest South London. "Don't be silly. And you pay up, my lad. I'm fed up with this. First I do me stuff, then you chloroform me, then you bandage me, then you keep me shut up 'ere, and now you accuse me of splitting. What you playing at?"

"You're lying, you little rat."

Papulous's voice was dangerously soft and he strode swiftly across the room towards the man on the bed, who shrank back in sudden alarm.

"Here—that'll do, that'll do. What's going on here?"

It was Oates who spoke. Followed by Campion and the sergeant he strode across the room.

"Let the fellow go," he commanded. "Good heavens, man, you're choking him."

Doubling his fist, he brought it up under the other man's wrists with a blow which not only loosed their hold but sent their owner staggering back across the room.

The man on the bed let out a howl and stumbled toward the door into the waiting arms of Sergeant Bloom, but Oates did not notice him. His eyes were fixed upon the face of the tall man on the other side of the room.

"The Widow!" he ejaculated. "Well, I'll be damned!"

The other smiled.

"More than probably, my dear Inspector. Or have they promoted you?" he said. "But at the moment I'm afraid you're trespassing."

The superintendent glanced inquiringly at the mild and elegant figure at his side.

"False pretenses is the charge," murmured Mr. Campion affably. "There are certain rather unpleasant traces of blackmail in the matter, but false pretenses will do. There are six witnesses and myself."

The man whose alias was The Widow stared at his accuser.

"Who are you?" he demanded, and then, as the answer dawned upon him, he swore softly. "Campion," he said. "Albert Campion . . . I ought to have recognized you from your description."

Campion grinned. "That's where I had the advantage of you," he said.

Mr. Campion and the superintendent drove back to London together, leaving a very relieved company of experts to travel home in their own ways. Oates was jubilant.

"Got him," he said. "Got him at last. And a clear case. A pretty little swindle, too. Just like him. If you hadn't been there all those poor devils would have paid up something. They're the kind of people he goes for, folk whose business depends on their absolute integrity. They all represent small firms, you see, with old, conservative clients. When did you realize that he wasn't the real Gervaise Papulous?"

"As soon as I saw him I thought it unlikely." Campion grinned as he spoke. "Before I left town I rang up the publishers of the Papulous monograph. They had lost sight of him, they said, but from their publicity department I learned that Papulous

was born in '72. So as soon as I saw our friend The Widow I realized that he was a good deal younger than the real man. However, like a fool I didn't get on to the swindle until this morning. It was when he was putting on that brilliant final act of his. I suddenly recognized him and, of course, the whole thing came to me in a flash."

"Recognized him?" Oates looked blank. "I never described him to you."

Mr. Campion looked modest. "D'you remember showing off to a very pretty girl I brought up to your office, and so far forgetting yourself as to produce an advertisement from an evening paper?" he inquired.

"I remember the ad," Oates said doggedly. "The fellow advertised for a kids' entertainer. But I don't remember him including a photograph of himself."

"He printed his name," Campion persisted. "It's a funny nickname. The significance didn't occur to me until I looked at him this morning, knowing that he was a crook. I realized that he was tricking us but I couldn't see how. Then his face gave him away."

"His face?"

"My dear fellow, you haven't spotted it yet. I'm glad of that. It didn't come to me for a bit. Consider that face. How do crooks get their names? How did Beaky Doyle get his name? Why was Cauliflower Edwards so called? Think of his forehead, man. Think of his hair."

"Peak," said the superintendent suddenly. "Of course, a widow's peak! Funny, I didn't think of that before. It's obvious when it comes to you. But even so," he added more seriously, "I wonder you cared to risk sending for me on that alone. Plenty of people have a widow's peak. You'd have looked silly if he'd been on the level."

"Oh, but I had the advertisement as well," Campion objected. "Taken in conjunction, the two things are obvious. That demonstration last night was masterly. Young brandy went in at one end of the apparatus and old brandy came out at the other, and we saw, or thought we saw, the spirit the whole time. There was only one type of man who could have done it—a children's party entertainer."

Oates shook his head.

"I'm only a poor demented policeman," he said derisively. "My mind doesn't work. I'll buy it."

Campion turned to him. "My good Oates, have you ever been to a children's party?"

"No."

"Well, you've been a child, I suppose?"

"I seem to remember something like it."

"Well, when you were a child what entertained you? Singing? Dancing? *The Wreck of the Hesperus?* No, my dear friend,

there's only one kind of performer who goes down well with children and that is a member of the brotherhood of which Jessant is hardly an ornament. A magician, Oates. In other words, a conjurer. And a damned good trick he showed us all last night!"

He trod on the accelerator and the car rushed on again.

The superintendent sat silent for a long time. Then he glanced up.

"That *was* a pretty girl," he said. "Nice manners, too."

"Leonie?" Campion nodded. "That reminds me, I must telephone her when we get back to town."

"Oh?" The superintendent was interested. "Nothing I can do for you, I suppose?" he inquired archly.

Campion smiled. "Hardly," he said. "I want to tell her she owes me two pounds."

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what's new in crime

by... Hans Stefan Santesson

Recent essays in the somewhat deadly arts, novels that you'll wish to relax with, and a book which will be rather disturbing.

POLITICAL innocents will undoubtedly find Allan MacKinnon's SUMMONS FROM BAGHDAD (Doubleday, $2.95) decidedly confusing. The novel reports, en passant, on the decidedly complex purposes and cross-purposes which, today as a thousand years ago, makes life in the Near East so disturbing for less complicated souls.

As a people, we, of course prefer simpler explanations. You are either saved or you're a sinner, you're either *for* us or *agin'* us. There is something faintly suspect in the possibility that there can be a third force, as there was in China at one time, which may have a tendency to cry, "A pox on both your houses!" And it is even more disturbing to suggest that there can be still another viewpoint, its spokesmen as honest and as patriotic and as self-less as (one hopes) the others. . . .

Motives for alliances—and motives for assassinations, political or personal—have a particular fluidity in the Near East which is not always appreciated by some writers who prefer the simpler formulae when they find it neces-

Even though our friend over on the Saint's Ratings *desk has returned from his vacation, acidulously startled (to put it mildly) by the quality of some of the novels waiting for him, we continue our own—sometimes more elaborate—comments on current mystery and suspense novels.*

sary to have their favorite private eye indulge in some basic exercises in variations on that Casbah so much identified with Charles Boyer. But people and politicians in these countries are terribly uncooperative and refuse to conform to our demand for easily understood motives for their decisions. It is Allan MacKinnon's awareness of just this which makes his SUMMONS FROM BAGHDAD such a pleasantly realistic departure from the usual—norm. Michael Darroch's search for the men who murdered his father isn't perhaps immortal literature, but it is relaxing, and the background is excellent. Recommended.

The last years have seen a new shadow over the streets of this country.

This shadow is fear.

Fear—not only of insecurity, but of the wave of violence possibly born of this insecurity which seems to be sweeping the country's teen-agers, a wave of violence translated into thrill killings, teenage prostitution and dope addiction; a wave of violence which is no longer headline material, but is a reluctantly conceded part of our times.

Who and what is to blame for all this? Hot-rodders? Rock and roll? Elvis Presley or the James Dean cult? In Pittsburgh, a teenage street-walker is the go-between for a man who wants his wife killed; in Brooklyn, a youngster comes running, his eyes gleaming, throwing off his coat as he runs, eager to join in beating and pummeling a school official. Who *is* to blame for this?

Wenzell Brown's TEEN-AGE TERROR (Gold Medal Books, 35 cents) reports on a situation too much with us to be ignored and swept under the carpet with other unpleasant matters. These youngsters who roam the streets today are in many instances the raw material of tomorrow's headlines, tomorrow's lists of the "Most Wanted." Brown, probably better known for his novels about this lost generation than for his earlier work, has compiled a shocking record of a national sickness. What may be particularly disturbing to many, is that these young men and these young women, whose stories you may in some cases remember from yesterday's headlines, often come from middle-class or "protected" homes. This sickness, in other words, is not a class or particular community phenomenon. . . . TEEN-AGE TERROR will be disturbing reading, I'm afraid.

Rae Foley's Hiram Potter has been compared to Margery Allingham's urbane and extremely civilized Albert Campion, and to a certain extent this may be so, both being that *rara avis,* gentlemen of leisure. Those who have a nostalgic feeling for those dear bygone days when private detectives had

a less basic approach to the young ladies they met, will no doubt welcome Rae Foley's WHERE IS MARY BOSTWICK? (Dodd Mead, $2.95). Mr. Potter, an only mildly reluctant catalyst for violence, is an attractive if slightly improbable person—so corrupted have we become by the tempo of the times. A pleasant story.

Dorothy Quick's SOMETHING EVIL (Arcadia, $2.75), a story of murder on the Long Island shore so familiar to the author, has a pleasant quality to it, so characteristic of her work.

Edna Sherry's TEARS FOR JESSIE HEWITT (Dodd Mead, $2.95), is disturbing. The author, who will be remembered for SUDDEN FEAR, has some extraordinarily vivid (if slightly overdrawn) characters. It is true that it, to quote the publishers, "explores the overpowering egotism of the criminal mind," but the profoundness of this exploration is debatable. Instead of the idiot heroine found in some novels that shall be nameless, we have poor Jessie Hewitt, swept by her memories and complexes into this fantastic relationship that can have only one ending. You may question, except for one brief moment, that tears are due poor Jessie Hewitt, but she is by far the most interesting character in the novel, overshadowing even Homicide Lieutenant Lance Wiley.

Kenneth Lowe has shown a consistent ability to dig beneath the surface of life in smaller towns and to explore, with much of the surgical delicacy characteristic of Doris Miles Disney's earlier novels, the unpleasant little squiggly things often found so near the surface. . . . THE CATALYST (Doubleday, $2.95) by Kenneth Lowe, again has a town legend dethroned and the ramifications of small-town society laid bare. There are some attractive characters, Laurel (who, for once, doesn't turn out to be the evil woman . . .) and Al Selkirk, so capable of a long, long hate.

Claire Brooker's DARK MOSAIC (Arcadia, $2.75), while not precisely a story of "breathless suspense," *is* an attractively told story of unpleasant happenings in the Channel Islands and in Paris.

Josephine Bell, British novelist who will be remembered for her beautiful DEATH IN RETIREMENT, and for BONES IN THE BARROW, has a new novel from a quiet English village, DOUBLE DOOM (Macmillan, $3.25). Hilary St. John Strongitharm and Hugh Evenett Strongitharm, twins, die almost simultaneously. One of the brothers is gassed in the garden hothouse—the other dies in a hospital room. Suspects include a mentally deficient heiress, and a blind, egotistical dowager. Beautiful characterizations.

case of the faulty drier

by . . . Josephine Bell

The well known actress had apparently been murdered while Jill was still there in the Knightsbridge salon.

"GOOD HEAVENS," said Jill Wintringham, with surprise and feeling in her voice. "What a bit of luck it wasn't me!"

She handed her evening newspaper to her husband, pointing to a paragraph on the front page. David read it aloud.

" 'Well-known actress dies in West End beauty parlor. Blonde, thirty-one-year-old Phoebe Carlton slumped in her chair. The electric lead in the drier had parted, causing a short-circuit through her body.' How could it be you, darling? You aren't a well-known actress."

"Don't be silly, David. Don't you see where it happened?"

He looked again, then lifted his eyes to Jill's head.

"Fingold's, in Knightsbridge. Where you have your own hair done. It looks particularly good, too, this evening."

"It was done this afternoon, as you might have noticed before. It was done between 12:30 and 2, because that was the only time they could fit me in at short notice. If you look at the paper again you will see that the drier packed up about two o'clock."

Josephine Bell, prominent British mystery novelist, author of the recent FALL OVER CLIFF *(Macmillan, $2.75) and several other novels, makes a first appearance in* THE SAINT *with this story of murder in the last place we rather innocently naive males might expect to find it—a beauty parlor.*

"So it did."

"It might have been me."

David took this calmly.

"Do they have only one drier?"

She snatched the paper back from him.

"If that's all you care—"

"Half a minute. Let me have it back. Look, it says she was discovered shortly *after* two. You must have left, or you would have heard the commotion."

"Yes. I went down in the lift at two exactly."

"How do you know that"?

"Because the customers' lift had a notice, 'Not Working,' and I looked at the clock above the lifts, and it said two, and at that moment the staff lift came up, so I went down in that."

The next evening David came in rather later than usual. Jill met him in the hall.

"I suppose you've seen the latest developments?" she asked.

"In the drier case? Yes, and rather more than that. I've been talking to Steve Mitchell about it."

"Why?"

"Because you were in the building, or had only just left it, at the time it happened. The papers have not got the whole facts of the case yet. Only that there has been a suggestion of foul play, and Scotland Yard has been asked to investigate."

"What did happen exactly?"

"Miss Phoebe Carlton—that was her stage name—the real one was Doreen Brooks. Anyway, the poor girl was discovered by one of the junior assistants, as it was reported last night. But what it omitted to say was that this girl was taking a drier into the cubicle where Miss Carlton was, in order to put it over her hair. In other words, the senior assistant who had set the hair, a man called Henry, had only just finished his job, and gone on to his next client, leaving his junior to fix the drier, fetch the magazines, and clear up after him generally. Would that be normal?"

"Perfectly normal," Jill answered.

"This girl assistant says she noticed the other drier the moment she entered the cubicle, and was putting her own machine away again, when she saw Miss Carlton's face."

"How—?" began Jill.

"In the mirror."

"Oh, of course."

"Yes. Of course, to anyone engaged in hairdressing, because I expect they look at the customer more in the mirror than any other way, since they are standing behind them most of the time."

"Yes," said Jill. "I always talk to Henry—"

She stopped dead. They looked at one another.

"I know," said David. "This Henry went straight to you from Miss Carlton. Your machine had been taken away outside your

cubicle by the same girl. She went to fetch a dry towel for Miss Carlton. Your hair was then dry, finished. Henry combed it out, or whatever they do; you did your face, put on your hat, and left, paying your bill at the cashier's desk at the end of the hairdressing section of the store. Henry went on to his third client to start her shampoo. He had barely begun when the girl assistant called to him."

"Miss Carlton was not killed by my drier, then?" said Jill, who had gone rather white.

"No. It was one that was not used much on account of its weight. It was an older type. Quite efficient, but they only used it if there was a rush on the others. That was the next thing the girl noticed. She says she saw Miss Carlton's face looking awful, swollen and discolored, with eyes staring and fixed, then she noticed the drier, and thought, 'Something's the matter with that thing. I always hated it.' "

"She thought in those words?"

"So she says."

"Then what?"

"She called to Henry and he went at once, really to curse her for calling out like that, instead of going to him. However, he saw at once that something terrible had happened, and sent the girl to tell the management and get a doctor. He then saw that the drier was much lower than it ought to be."

"Lower down over Miss Carlton's head?"

"No. Lower than it would be for anyone sitting normally upright. Otherwise she would have slipped down from under it. She was slumped down in her chair, but the drier was still over her head, and the head was lying back against its rim."

"It must have been fixed in that position?"

"Exactly. A doctor arrived and found that Miss Carlton was dead. The two men together noted the position of the drier and then moved the body away from it, leaving the machine where it was. Henry got a slight shock as he did so. He examined the drier and found one of the leads had been cut. Quite definitely cut. At that stage they sent for the police. It was murder, all right."

There was a short silence, then David went on.

"I suppose you did not see any unfamiliar faces while you were at Fingold's? No, I don't mean in the shop. Of course there'd be hundreds, milling round every department. I mean among the assistants in the hairdressing part."

"No. I can't remember any."

"No. That's just it. No one knows who moved the drier into Miss Carlton's cubicle. Nobody in the department or outside it saw an unfamiliar face that afternoon."

"But it must have been a hairdresser, mustn't it? To know about the inside of a drier?"

"Yes. An electrician might understand them. But wouldn't be likely to know how to arrange one over a customer's head. I think the murderer did not intend the crime to be discovered so soon. He or she probably imagined anyone looking into the cubicle would see the back of a customer in a drier and go out again. They forgot the face would show."

"That's odd, if the murderer really was a practicing hairdresser."

"Very. But on the other hand he or she must have known the time of Miss Carlton's appointment, which of the assistants it was with, and which cubicle she would occupy."

"So it ought to be someone who works at the shop, or frequents it."

"Exactly. That would account for him or her not being noticed. Even if they were wearing an unusual dress."

"What do you mean?"

"No one would dare tamper with a drier, push it over a customer's head, dressed in their ordinary clothes. The customer, for one, would notice at once. But in the white coat of the hairdressing department, which is worn by both men and girl assistants, she would not be noticed by busy people, if she kept her head turned away."

"How could anyone have got hold of an assistant's white coat?"

"Actually one of them was away that day. The coat was hanging up in the ante-room of the general cloakroom for the staff of the whole floor. It could have been used and replaced. At that time, the normal lunch hour, business was slack. Most of the assistants were in the staff rest room, waiting for their afternoon appointments to start."

"Well then, it could have been done that way by someone outside the department. But who had any possible motive for killing this poor creature?"

"That's the snag. No one, really. But she was not very well liked in her profession. Rather selfish, her fellow-workers at the theatre said, and a bit stand-offsh. But nothing extreme. They said she wasn't exciting enough to be hated."

"Then it must be someone in the shop. Or in her past," added Jill.

David looked up quickly.

"In her past. Yes, that's what I said to Steve before I came away from the Yard. Now darling, I have just remembered that you said you went down from the hairdressing department in a staff lift. Can you think back and tell me who were in it with you?"

Jill thought for a time.

"Any other customers?" David asked, to encourage her.

"No. Wait a minute. There was the porter, of course."

"What like?"

"Elderly, ex-Service, gray hair, nice old face, straight shoulders, called me 'Miss.' "

"Good for him. Who else?"

"A cleaner. Down-trodden type in a green overall. Kept in the back corner of the lift. I noticed her because she seemed to belong to the old tradition, not the new, and she smelt of onions."

"Which you resented?"

"Oh, dear me, no. Which I welcomed, because the onions covered up the ghastly scent of the young woman in black. A counter assistant, I think she is—on cosmetics. Absolute mask of a face, and eyes as hard as agate; I think that is the usual cliché."

"Nails would do, if they were gray eyes."

"They weren't. Black as sloes, if you can imagine stony sloes."

"Try jet."

"All right. Shall we leave her now? We seem to be going round in circles. The only other member of the lift party was a young man in dungarees. Engineer type."

"Young mechanic. Hard-faced assistant in cosmetics, which are next door to the hairdressing, aren't they? Cleaner—what age?"

"Oh, quite youngish. Wan-looking, and depressed."

"Or frightened?"

Jill stared at her husband.

"David! Was it one of those people?"

"Could have been; they were there at the time. So were a lot of other people."

He got up to go.

"I must see Steve again."

"Why?"

"Miss Carlton's past. If it fits in where I think it will, the case is closed."

"But—you don't know who did it?"

"I think I do. But I'll need Steve to prove it."

"Tell me, darling."

"You've got all you need to come to the same conclusion as I have."

"Pig!"

"See you later."

At midnight Jill went to bed, tired of sitting up, and of turning the same thoughts over and over in her mind. An hour later David stumbled against her bed and woke her.

"Terribly sorry, darling, I was trying to manage in the dark."

"Did you solve the case?" she asked, sleepily.

"Yes. It worked out the way I thought. As a matter of fact Steve had just got there himself, by a different route."

"How?"

"Digging up the past, as I said we'd have to do. I'll tell you a little story. Once upon a time there were two apprentice hairdressers. They worked together at the same shop, and they were friends. They were both rather lazy, and did not try very hard to learn their trade. One of them was Miss Carlton. She had beauti-

ful, natural blonde hair, so she was chosen to have it dressed by her boss at a hairdressers' competition for new styles. She was noticed at this competition by a theatrical chap, and soon made her way out of hairdressing into musical comedy choruses. The other apprentice was madly jealous, and broke off their friendship. Eventually this one was found tampering with the till, was dismissed, and went from job to job before finishing up at Fingold's.

"Miss Carlton came to the shop regularly for her hair-do and manicure. She was recognized by her former friend, and the old hatred revived, inflamed by the contrast in their present circumstances. I think Miss Carlton's short sight prevented her making the same discovery. So the spite grew, and eventually murder was planned, and executed, and might have been successful if you had not had your hair washed at short notice between 12:30 and 2."

"Oh, no, David! Then it *was* one of those people in the lift. Which one?"

"It was not."

"Then who?"

"It was the lift-girl from the passenger lift. You said yourself it had a 'Not Working' notice on it. That young man in dungarees had just had a look at it, and found it okay. He realized the lift-girl had wanted time off, and did not want to get her into trouble, so he left the notice in place, and simply reported the lift was okay. He guessed she would operate it again, before there were any more complaints. He did not own up to all this until Steve asked him a few direct questions."

"How did she actually work the murder?"

"She went to the floor cloakroom for the staff, which she knew well, of course. She nipped into the vacant coat, doctored the drier, killed her victim—who did not see her clearly, and had never recognized her as the lift girl who had so often taken her up and down. She slipped back the coat, and returned to the lift. She made one mistake, perhaps two. She forgot the dead face would be seen in the mirror and the body discovered almost at once. And she over-reached herself by putting up that notice. You saw it and remembered the whole incident. If she had just left her lift for a few minutes to go to the cloakroom, you would have waited—more or less patiently—and it would have made no impression."

"Someone else might have made a fuss and asked for her."

"Precisely. Someone else did. And the shop being an efficient one, we have the deadly evidence of the engineer. She over-reached herself, as I said. But she wanted to make sure of enough time, with no interruptions, and no one looking for her. She will find it very difficult to explain why—to a jury."

death in the jungle

by . . . Murray Leinster

There was a time when murder had a sound economic basis—but times changed and now murder was forbidden by law.

SOMEBODY evidently thought it would be a nice day for a murder. Up by Tupuilo—which is beyond Tunnibuli, which is beyond Kosuo, which is many a weary and uncivilized mile from Tulagi Harbor—somebody had been thinking similar thoughts about other nice days lately. Therefore Nichols, sweating, followed Sergeant Firu along a jungle-path, and four privates of the Solomon Islands Native Constabulary followed him.

There was no sky, of course. The jungle met overhead. There was no real path. It simply happened to be possible to penetrate the jungle in a certain direction when walking in single file. On either hand one might sometimes see for three or four yards between trees, vines, nonflowering orchids and assorted brush. Sometimes one could see only one yard. The view was never inspiriting. Nichols sweated and wondered drearily why he had thought it would be exciting and romantic to be a resident magistrate in the Solomons, where the local population did not understand what law was, and were naively aston-

There are two Murray Leinsters. One is author of SF novels like COLONIAL SURVEY *(Gnome),* OPERATION OUTER SPACE *(Signet) and* CITY OF THE MOON *(Avalon). The other is the author of adventure stories, set in far corners of the world, such as this report on the urge to mayhem in the Solomons.*

ished that murders, rapes, thefts and such unsanitary practices were frowned on by white men.

The jungle was full of small noises, mostly insects. The world was full of many more pleasing activities than trying to find out who had been murdering who up Tupuilo way, lest a normal state of inter-village warfare start up again. Nichols wondered drearily why he wasn't doing some of those other, pleasing things instead of this.

Then the man who thought this would be a nice day for a murder decided that a nice time for committing it had come.

He was hidden in the brush five yards from the path. He was not a pretty man. His hair was frizzy, and had been bleached to a sort of mottled red by the use of lime. His skin was practically black, and he smelled very badly of rancid unguents with which he had smeared himself. His chest was decorated with scarifications and other art-work, and he was deplorably uncivilized. But he had an ingenious rest for his gas-pipe gun. Laid in notches in stout sticks imbedded in the soil, it was perfectly registered on its target.

Nichols was the target, though he knew nothing of the matter. Even Sergeant Firu had no suspicions. But the man in the bush pulled the trigger.

There was a thunderous report. A monstrous cloud of white smoke billowed out. There was a rattling, tearing noise as innumerable odd-shaped slugs tore through leaves and severed small vines on the way to Nichols. He felt an impact on his jaw-bone and heard the curiously ringing echo of the shot among the tree-trunks. He snatched out his revolver. But Firu's rifle cracked first, and then the ambush tactics of the Solomon Islands Native Constabulary went into operation.

Sergeant Firu, having fired, leaped for the cloud of black-powder smoke. Two constabulary privates began to send lead whizzing ahead of him. The two others burnt up the jungle still farther ahead. The situation, in short, was well in hand. Nichols swore when he discovered that the pain in his jaw came from a slug-wound down to the bone, still containing a certainly unsanitary missile.

It was all very quick. The boom of the gun. The crack of a rifle instantly thereafter, while bits of scrap-iron and rock still tore messily through fleshy leaves. Then a yell from Firu, the quick bark of two rifles in action, and a moment later two more. Then came a calm order in Firu's official, ceremonial manner. Silence again.

Nichols fumbled at his jaw, exploring. Firu's voice came from the bush some five yards away.

"One-fella boy, sar," he reported. "He think he make 'm *kai-kai* along somebody." He switched from his official English to the

more workable To'a Ba'ita to give an order. "Yes, sar," he went on an instant later. "I no savvy what name belong along this fella boy. My word, no!"

Nichols found the end of a bit of nail. It had hit sidewise. He pulled it out with his finger-nail. It hurt abominably and he said, "Damn!"

"One-fella boy, sar," repeated Firu from the bush. "No more."

Nichols went gingerly through thorns to look at his would-be assassin. There was no point in being upset. When one is Resident Magistrate of the larger part of Tupuilo, a murder or an attempted one isn't really remarkable. One can regard even the fact that one is the chosen murderee, so to speak, with calmness. Nichols looked down at the dead man, holding his handkerchief against his bleeding jaw.

"And he missed me at five yards!" he observed.

The dead man's ears were stretched into enormous multiple loops of flesh, in which stray objects of *virtu* were stuck. His lips were pierced. From the flesh of his nostrils projected the claws of a flying-fox, thrust through from within the nasal passages. And he was striped, and circled, and variously decorated with streaks and dots and painted designs which were supposed to draw attention to his bravery, his prowess, and his especial endowment of sex-appeal. There were three bullet-holes in him, and he wore an expression of extreme astonishment.

Nichols regarded him with annoyance. The ambush tactics of the Solomon Islands Native Constabulary are very efficient, because they call for an immediate charge upon the ambush, with everybody who can work a rifle flinging lead ahead of the charging party. And of course your native can't understand anything like that. When he is shot at, he runs away. The constabulary's exactly opposite tactics confuse and alarm him. So he gets hurt.

"But why," demanded Nichols, "did one man fire into all of us? He had only one gun!"

"I see, sar," said Firu formally.

His long, gnarled, bare black legs moved in the elaborate pattern which cuts down thorn-scratches to a minimum. He wore a khaki forage-cap atop the frizziest head of hair in the Solomons, he wore a faded khaki tunic. He wore nothing else. His long legs looked incredibly naked. He went back to the bush-path and surveyed its length. He considered, tugging meditatively at the dangling strip of cartilage at the end of his nose. Once, that decoration had allowed a nose-plug to add to Firu's good looks, just as his pierced and far-stretched ear-lobes had held coquettish decorations of pig-bones, tea-cup handles, and the like. Now, of course, as a sergeant in the constabulary, Firu indulged in no such vanities. The

strip of cartilage remained like a rudimentary trunk beneath his nose, but his ear-strips were coiled upon themselves. They formed neat rosettes of tight-stretched, glistening flesh. To Firu, the result seemed severely military.

A constabulary private picked up the dead man's gun. It was an antique Tower musket which at some time had lain long under water, because there were deep rusted hollows in the metal. But it was lovingly polished now, and mounted in a native-style stock which would inevitably behead the man who fired it when some day it burst. The private grunted approval at the craftsmanship.

Then Firu grunted. Nichols jerked his head around. Firu reached into the bush on the opposite side of the trail. He got down on hands and knees and pushed his hand cautiously among prickly bushes.

Nichols saw him push delicately against an innocent-seeming section of vine. The thing gave. Then there was a resonant, *"Twang-g-g-g!"* and a spear came out of nowhere and hurtled out of sight. The vine had been the trigger of a man-trap.

" 'Ora sua," said Firu warningly, at a babble from his followers. *" 'Ora sua ni firii!"*

He crawled along the path, squinting into the jungle. He reached in again. A second *"Twang-g-g-g!"* and a second spear.

Firu stood up and beckoned to his underlings. They went at the jungle like so many terriers. It became a game. In the next ten minutes they uncovered six trap-spears, discharged by tripping or brushing over apparently guileless vines or twigs. There were four strips of thorny vine, each sharp point of which had been smeared with a gummy stuff which smelled luridly of decay. And then one of the privates turned up an especially neat bit of camouflage. It was an area of seemingly natural jungle-floor which would give way when one's foot touched it and drop one into a spear-studded pit below.

Nichols went over to look at that. He saw sundry dark stains on the fire-sharpened stakes waiting below. He swore.

"Going back to the good old days, eh?" he said wrathfully. "Dammit, Firu! We haven't allowed mantraps for years! Wouldn't even let 'em be used against the Japs! Who the devil's been raking up old trade secrets like these?"

There was a time, of course, when all the Solomons lived in a happy state of permanent war. Pathways were booby-trapped with innumerable varieties of armament. Strangers were fair game and there was no closed season. And of course this warfare had a sound economic basis, in that every stranger had a head on his shoulders, which when properly

smoke-cured was worth at least four fathoms of shell-money—the old, undepreciated shell-money. But those were the good old days. For a long while now the traditional avenues to wealth had been closed by government order. Private possession of cured heads, even, was forbidden, and cherished treasures had been gathered up and buried in what most natives considered a sort of Solomon Islands Fort Knox.

Nichols got out antisceptic and doused his handkerchief with it. He saturated the still slightly bleeding wound. It hurt again. Abominably.

He ran his eyes again over the now-trampled brush. He hadn't seen anything like this in years. The ambush was as strictly reasoned out as a nuclear weapon, with equally precise knowledge of its action and targets. From hiding, where the dead man now lay, everything was under control. If a single man came along the bush-path, the operator from the control-tower, as it were, could knock him off with the musket. It would be messy, but the evidence could be cleaned up and the secret of the ambush kept. If several men came along together, the operator would blast the second or third. The others would infallibly dive into the bush away from the shot. In so doing, they would run into the trap-spears or else into the thorns with the poisoned tips. Or the pit.

Today's disaster had come about because of improper loading of the gun, most likely. Nichols wasn't killed and the constabulary tactics took over. So Nichols had on hand the corpse of a would-be murderer and clear proof of the revival of ancient tribal practices. But he was not pleased.

"Old Tha'ulafia," he said wrathfully, "swears that six people from his village have vanished in the past six months. Old Bumbulo swears his village has lost seven! And one or the other of them was raking up old tricks . . ." He said coldly, "All right! Make some sort of litter and we'll find out which village this character comes from!"

The old and depraved Tha'ulafia ruled the village Nichols had just left. The fat and ill-smelling Bumbulo ruled the one for which he was bound. Both were villains of purest ray serene, but both ought to know better than this! Nichols began to steam. Both chiefs had sent runners protesting that somebody was murdering their subjects. But one of them—

Then Nichols stopped short. He happened to notice Firu's toes. They were long and black and prehensile, at the front end of particularly long splay feet. And they writhed. They waved violently in the dust. Nichols was no psychologist, but he knew Firu. The writhing toes betrayed deep inner distress.

"Eh?" said Nichols. "What's on your mind, Firu?"

"'M fella head belong along me," complained Firu, "it walk about plenty too much!"

Nichols considered. The hold of white men upon aborigines can only be maintained by psychology or by violence. Nichols was no psychologist, but he did know that resident magistrates are expected not to use force except when being shot at.

"Of course," he said, "if there could be more information—"

"Yes, sar," said Firu. His toes ceased writhing.

He dived to the ground. Nichols had observed that there was no bush-path to where the would-be murderer had waited. Firu crawled. Suddenly he vanished. At man-height there was no path. But at ground level there was a sort of tunnel through the underbrush. Firu spoke from invisibility, in To'a Ba'ita. The constabulary privates got out bush-knives. They began to carve through foliage down to the "crawling-way" Firu had discovered.

Then it was chop and chop through insanely tangled vines and creepers. Firu's voice came triumphantly from a long distance off. It was half an hour before the privates had hacked a way to where he waited. He stood where the tunnel ended in a man-high path. It had known at least some traffic every day for months.

"But," said Nichols protestingly, "this is a new trail! It doesn't go to either village!"

"No, sar," said Firu. "Other fella *toaa*. One other-fella village, sar. Every day one-fella boy, maybe two-fella boy, maybe plenty-fella boy come *to kinanina* along this place."

Then Nichols muttered. It is always possible, of course, for a village to exist in jungle without anybody but its inhabitants knowing anything about it. It isn't likely, especially since white men have insisted that strangers mustn't be killed because somebody happens to go broke, and peaceful trade has reluctantly been accepted as a substitute for head-hunting. But a village could remain unknown, if its inhabitants wanted it to. The bush is not suitable for casual strolling. Your Solomon Island native stays close to home.

But this village had not stayed close enough. Hidden from the world, its people had either clung to their old customs or revived them. They'd made a sort of Manhattan Project—a special trail of unknown length, leading to a bush-tunnel half a mile long, with that going neatly to within five yards of an inter-village highway. And there they'd happily established an ambush for passers-by.

So again Nichols followed Firu down a jungle-path, but this time his thoughts were grim. He did not follow Firu because he was

afraid, but because Firu was better able to spot traps. At the moment Firu was bitterly chagrined because he hadn't spotted the business a little way back. And he was the one to hear the first sounds from ahead.

He stopped. Nichols listened, and the four privates listened, and there was a brief technical discussion in To'a Ba'ita. Then Nichols observed the direction of the wind and lighted a pipe. Two of the privates moved off into the brush. They moved slowly and with great care. Nichols regarded his watch. His followers glanced at the sun.

They waited.

It was singularly peaceful. Nichols and Sergeant Firu and two constabulary privates loafed tranquilly on an extremely narrow bushpath. Far away, they heard a baby howling enragedly, demanding nourishment. They heard that faint, formless, high-pitched babbling which is women chattering when away from men. Once—they had been waiting perhaps half an hour—a dog yelped sharply on a rising note. It had probably been surprised and was being killed to provide somebody with a light lunch. Always they heard the cries of insects, and now and again there were bird-calls, and twice they heard that mournful cooing sound which must be a bird, but which everybody names differently.

Nichols fretted. Times have changed in the Solomons. Anthropologists bewail the civilizing effect of the late war in changing primitive manners and customs before they have been written down. A really unspoiled village would be a triumph for such a man, but Nichols fumed because such a village existed in his territory. He would have to tame it. Obviously. Head-hunting simply couldn't be condoned. But a village which didn't know better than to hunt heads might not know better than to fight constabulary troopers and a white man.

He looked at his watch again. A long time later, a third time. He nodded to Firu, and now he took the lead. He marched confidently down the bush-path. Half a mile from the waiting-place the party emerged into a clearing. A perfectly normal village lay before them. Houses perched high on wooden stilts, with wattle walls and palm-thatch roofs. Naked children played on the ground. Wary, mongrel dogs moved cautiously about. The huge peaked bachelor's house and the devil-devil house and several small cooking-fires.

A woman screamed shrilly at sight of the invaders. Children shrieked in terror because one of the invaders was white. Warriors bobbed into sight—saw a white man—panicked—and then counted. Yells arose. Somebody shrieked commands from the devil-devil house. A drum began to beat in

its noisesome recesses. The warriors bunched together for assurance and charged the newcomers.

Nichols blew a whistle. It did not occur to him that the constabulary tactics for occupying a hostile village were psychological in nature. Instantly, from the far side of the clearing, there came the sound of rapid firing—not the dull boomings of trade-guns, but the spiteful cracks of rifles. It sounded like a very considerable force instead of two privates of the constabulary who had circled the village for this effect.

The incipient charge wavered, stopped, and then dissolved. The warriors became impassioned civilians, intensely passive.

Nichols led his men on. They came to the first house of the village. Two privates shinned up into it, searched it swiftly, and the fragments of broken weapons dropped to the ground. They descended, and the next house was subject to visitation.

The privates on the opposite side of the village appeared. The disarming of the population proceeded. In half an hour the occupation was complete. There were doubtless arms in hiding, but the warriors were cowed. The women looked at once frightened and coy when the constabulary troopers looked at them. The children screamed on the same provocation.

So Nichols seated himself in state on the porch of the towering bachelor's house with a rifle laid beside him. Sergeant Firu stood at his back. Frowning, Nichols had the chief of the village brought before him. His followers remained out of earshot.

"What name belong along you—" began Nichols angrily. Then he remembered that *bechede-mer* English would not be known here. In To'a Ba'ita he asked pungently what the hell the people of this village meant by knocking off their neighbors.

The chief's name was Fata'i. He was ancient, wrinkled, and frightened past all reason. His few teeth chattering, he explained that he took great pleasure in killing people. He had prepared an ambush in which he pursued his hobby. He mentioned, in detail, identifying characteristics of his victims. He claimed that he, single-handed, had murdered all the people missing from the villages of Tha'ulafia and Bombuli respectively.

Nichols waved him away. A scarred warrior took his place. He explained—trembling too much for a man who had only committed murder—that he took great pleasure in killing people. He had prepared an ambush in which he pursued his hobby. He described in detail the missing persons he claimed to have murdered alone, without assistance.

A third mature man. A fourth. A young man. Another older man. Nichols' scowl grew deeper.

He seethed. It was bad enough to have found a hitherto unknown village in his territory, where the old unregenerate custom of head-hunting was classed as a virile sport. He'd have to take his murderers all the way to Yulagi Harbor and testify to their misdeeds, and his district would suffer from his absence. But at this rate he'd be ridiculous! Fourteen elaborately scarified, painted, tattooed savages confessed to the solitary commission of the same crimes. There were more men waiting to make additional confessions. But too many men admitted too much for anybody to believe.

He called off the questioning, steaming angry. He was being made ridiculous. The panicked villagers were much too scared to try such a thing, but they were accomplishing it. He waved them away and glared at Firu. He said sardonically:

"Nice business!"

"Yes, sar," said Firu unhappily. " 'M fella head belong along those fella boy walk about plenty too much. Somebody fright 'm plenty fella hell along those fella boy!"

"Your comment," observed Nichols dourly, "is a masterpiece of understatement!"

"Sar?" said Firu.

Nichols grunted. There is no indignation quite like that of a conscientious man frustrated in his duty. Nichols had a case of multiple murder on his hands, though of course it could not be taken as seriously as elsewhere. Murder has been made a serious offense in modern times, but your Solomon Islander simply cannot see that the casual assassination of a stranger is immoral.

The village went apprehensively about its normal affairs while Nichols stewed in his frustration. Violence cannot well be deplored by white men who practice it. The native cannot become law-abiding unless the law follows a comprehensible ritual. In effect, the only way to rule a primitive race—or any other—is by violence or psychology. Nichols couldn't use violence and he was short on psychology. Fourteen men had confessed to the same murders, and thereby each man had thirteen alibis. Which was not normal, but pathological. A psychiatrist was needed to apply abnormal psychology to the situation, and a sweat-streaked resident magistrate with a brand-new slug-wound on his jaw was not qualified.

Nichols brooded. In the end he said distastefully:

"Get the devil-devil doctor, Firu."

Firu saluted and departed with splendid ceremony. Nichols muttered to himself. He did not enjoy encounters with devil-devil doctors. Their hold over their parishioners was exactly what he found it hard to understand. Even a sound knowledge of psychology doesn't help, because your devil-devil doctor is a psychologist of a

high order in a low profession, maintaining an immoral ascendency over his fellows by the exact reverse of psychotherapy. Nichols wasn't qualified for open conflict. He knew it.

He waited irritably. Firu came back with the village devil-devil doctor. He was short, plump and very evil to look at. He began a furious questioning.

He got nowhere—as he expected. The devil-devil doctor met all assaults with a manner of injured innocence. With a furtive gleam in his eye he demanded that his parishioners be questioned. He betrayed the fact that he understood Firu's *beche-de-mer* English, and Nichols ground his teeth. This man had been a plantation boy at some time. He knew his right, often a great hindrance to the administration of justice.

"You one-fella *inoto do* Gov'-ment," he declared piously. "You no got'm law knock seven bells along me. Other-fella boy tell you I one-fella good boy altogether."

And Nichols glared at him. Which was bad psychology. Swearing, he sent him away, which was worse. He commanded Firu to round up an assortment of villagers. He questioned them enragedly. Which was worse still. Because everybody—maids, matrons, children and the old—yammered with terror and testified to the virtue, the goodness, and the utter blamelessness of the devil-devil doctor in all matters human and demoniac. If he'd actually been as meek and harmless as they said, somebody would have speared him long before out of sheer annoyance. Nichols dismissed them, fuming.

Quiet descended upon the village once more. The sun rose high. The jungle drooped in the midday heat. Within the bachelors' house the prisoners sat gloomily under the guard of a single constabulary private. Two other privates slumbered in the shade of the bachelors-house porch. The fourth stood drowsy guard over Nichols' safety.

Nichols suffered the particularly bitter self-condemnation of a conscientious man. He'd found the village from which some thirteen murders had been committed, but he had fourteen prisoners who severally confessed to everyone and exonerated everybody else. And Nichols knew that the devil-devil doctor was at least privy to all of them and really must have directed the whole project. But down at Tulagi Harbor this knowledge would not be enough. If he went down with these prisoners and their confessions they would all be set free, of course. But—much more important—a technique for the frustration of white-man-law would be abroad in his district. There would be hell to pay!

Heat shimmered in visible waves about the village. Heat invaded the jungle, turning all out-of-doors into an extra-hot Turkish

bath. Heat laid upon the village a weight of pure inertia, in which even children crept into shady places and slept, quivering, while their elders made snoring sounds despite the military occupation. Even the devil-devil doctor was presumably too hot to think up more deviltry.

And then Nichols happened to look at Firu. Firu hunkered down in the sunlight, thinking. His pose was one which would have cramped a white man's legs to uselessness in minutes. It was Firu's position when resting. His brows were knitted in concentration. That extraordinary, improbable bit of stretched cartilage at the end of his nose wavered gently with his breathing. The tightly-looped rosettes of flesh which were his ear-lobes curled neatly out of the way, seemed to sweat.

Nichols regarded him sardonically. This was a problem in government, which made it a problem in psychology. The problem was that of getting men to deal truthfully with the power of the government. Firu obviously worked upon it, because his toes were writhing. But Nichols did not expect Firu to solve a situation an entire battery of psychiatrists would not have been able to handle.

It happened, though, that Firu had an advantage in solving a psychological difficulty. The advantage was that he had never heard of psychology. He simply recalled the native village in which he had been brought up, and the unholy fear in which the spiritual adviser of his youth had kept his village. He recalled the methods by which that fear had been maintained. Then he considered how a sergeant of the Solomon Islands Native Constabulary would have handled that devil-devil doctor.

It was a simple process, but Firu did not think swiftly. It took him half an hour to work it out.

At the end of that time he stood up and shook himself. He saw Nichols' eyes upon him. He saluted.

"Sar," said Firu tentatively, "I go make 'm head belong 'm fella devil-devil doctor walk about *sui na'a.* Yes, sar?"

"Go ahead," said Nichols peevishly. "*I* don't care!"

Firu marched across the dusty village earth. A dog got up and scuttled out of the way, yelping though Firu had not touched him. Firu reached the devil-devil house. He shinned up the ladder and went inside. Deep peace hung over the village for five seconds.

Then there was a startled squawk within the devil-devil house. The sound of a scuffle. Then a sudden, bloodthirsty yell. Then the devil-devil doctor's shrill voice, squealing words which were so particularly foul that Nichols didn't understand all of them. The general drift,

though, was such as to make each separate hair on one's head stand up and crack like a whip.

Firu appeared on the porch of the devil-devil house, dragging the village wizard after him. He had that lighter-skinned ecclesiastic by the hair, and it is notorious that even an average, run-of-the-mill devil-devil doctor is so holy that anybody who touches his head is bound to shrivel up and die instantly. Even if the touch is by accident. Yet Firu dragged the howling man by the most utterly sacrosanct portion of his sacrosanct person.

He hauled him into plain sight, stood him up, and slapped him so his head flapped to one side. His manner was ceremonial. He slapped the devil-devil doctor's right-hand, scabrous cheek. He then slapped the devil-devil doctor's left-hand, filthy jowl. He swung the devil-devil doctor around and kicked him with his bare foot. The devil-devil doctor went sprawling. Then Firu brushed off his hands and descended the ladder. He marched in a military manner to Nichols.

"Sar," said Firu, "these-fella village boy, they think what name I no die. That fella devil-devil doctor, sar, he much *mata'i* I no die! Yes, sar?"

Nichols knew that the last question was a request for approval. He nodded—not understanding because he was grieved and depressed as a conscientious man can be when he sees his whole work threatened. Firu saluted magnificently. He went into the cool shade of the bachelors' house. Nichols puzzled his now discouraged brain, to no effect.

The air grew suffocatingly hot. Presently Nichols dozed in the shadowed porch of the bachelors' house. In his dream he may have heard the hum of conversation behind him. He probably heard Firu's voice, mingled with other voices which at first were scared and commiserating, and then were doubtful, and then were very awed indeed. But he dozed.

Presently Firu came out of the bachelors' house to report. He found Nichols fast asleep with flies buzzing about him. Firu regarded him benevolently. He vanished within the gigantic palm-thatch structure and gave orders. The constabulary soldier who guarded the prisoners woke another and curled up to sleep. The wakened man sat up and rubbed his eyes. There were small creakings within the house. The fourteen prisoners crept quietly out the other end of the structure and scattered to their homes.

Firu came and stood formally over Nichols with a fly-whisk. He used it while Nichols slumbered. Presently he watched placidly while things happened.

Nichols woke with a start. A yell woke him. It was a startled, a terrified, an incredulous yell. It was such a yell as might be uttered

by a hunter who found himself unarmed and surrounded by an army of rabbits with spears and clubs and murderous intentions. It was the yell the witch-doctor uttered at sight of his formerly pious flock unanimously turned atheist and anxious to get even for years of abject subjugation. The first yell was followed by others—six or seven of them.

They turned to screams—and stopped.

Nichols was on his feet, his revolver out. The devil-devil house seemed to swarm with the inhabitants of the village. There was a crackling sound and an irruption of smoke. Men poured out of the sanctuary of evil. There was much excited talk, while masses of smoke seemed to prepare for greater things.

Suddenly, women came toward the bachelors' house porch toward Nichols. They bore gifts. They offered every imaginable proof of desire for Nichols' good opinion. Startled and uneasy, he blushed a vivid red.

"Firu!" he snapped. "What the hell does this mean?"

"Those fella-boy, sar," said Firu formally, "they *kai-kai* 'm fella devil-devil doctor. Now they make friend along you."

Nichols blinked. Flames licked out of the devil-devil house. The villagers had killed their magician and fired his dwelling. Flames suddenly roared skyward. It seemed an admirable thing to have happened, but Nichols only partly understood.

"That fella, sar," said Firu officially, "he one-fella bad fella boy. My word, yes! He have 'm one-fella snake, sar, one-fella *'e a'i rikia* snake, sar. Those fella-boy much fright—"

"Hold hard!" commanded Nichols. "The devil-devil doctor had a snake you couldn't see? What's all this?"

Firu explained in the crisp, unintelligible style of an official report. Nichols groped until Firu lapsed into his native tongue. Then the tale was clear. All devil-devil doctors have to have supernatural protection against their parishioners. Firu had committed public sacrilege to bring this protection into view. The prisoners in the bachelor-house had commiserated with him because he was so soon to die. They explained how. The devil-devil doctor had a snake. It was an invisible snake. Nobody but himself could see it, but it was a large snake. Moreover, it was a trained, magic snake. It would go and kill anybody the devil-devil doctor told it to. No weapon could harm it.

The snake had been announced years before, and had grown larger and fatter with the passing of time. Through that snake, the devil-devil doctor had ruled this village with an absolute tyranny of which a mere Caligula or an Ivan the Terrible could form no idea.

"But—" sputtered Nichols, "didn't anybody ever try displeasing the devil-devil doctor? You mean they simply took his word? Did it ever kill anybody?"

"All fella boy, sar," explained Firu, "they much fright."

Nichols was not the sort of man who could understand the efficacy of a threat when there was nothing to back it up. But then Firu added blandly that, having learned about the devil-devil doctor's snake, he had said that Nichols also had a snake, but a larger and fiercer and much more fearful one. He'd told the villagers that Nichols' snake had eaten the devil-devil doctor's snake and he, Firu, had gone over and slapped the devil-devil doctor to find out if there were any other magic snakes around. If there had been, of course Nichols' snake would have killed them when they attacked Firu.

"But dammit, Firu," protested Nichols. "You told them—"

Then he stopped. The chief of the village was approaching. With him were the fourteen men Nichols had put as prisoners in the bachelors' house. All of them sweated when he scowled at them.

With chattering teeth, the Chief Fata'i explained that the devil-devil doctor had forbidden them to tell the truth before. But now that his magic snake had been eaten up by Nichols' magic snake, they desired only to do what the white man wished. And concerning those murders, this one was done by this man and that one by that . . .

Nichols reopened his inquiry. For once, he had native witnesses really anxious to tell him what he wanted to know. In ten minutes the situation was cleared up. Much of the blame—most of it—went to the devil-devil doctor. But he was very dead. The smoke of his funeral pyre still rose. Still, Nichols had a very neat ending to the affair. Victims identified, murderers penitent and ready for punishment, and the village so pacified that it would be the most painstakingly law-abiding one in Nichols' district.

He couldn't help feeling satisfied. The murderers would get from two to four years apiece in gaol in Tulagi Harbor. Which would convince them that the casual assassination of strangers was forbidden, even if they couldn't think it immoral. They would be chastened and impressed and more or less civilized during their stay in gaol. They would actually spread civilization among their fellows. Nichols even might receive praise for this handling of what could have been a nasty business. Of course the dead men were still dead, but nothing could be done about that.

But Nichols was a conscientious man. He wished morosely that he knew more about psychology. It is the means by which mankind is governed.

—Continued from Back Cover

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